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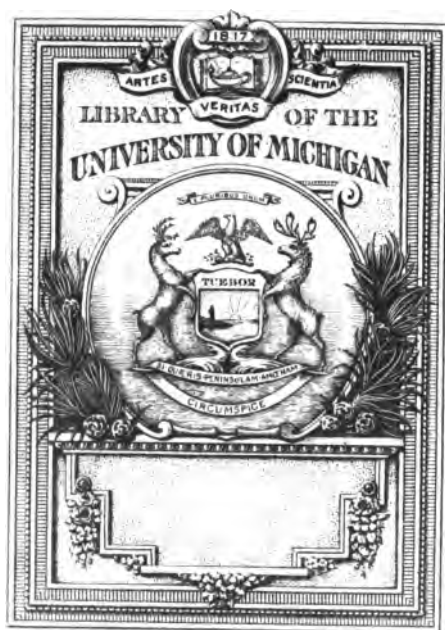
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1787





L E T T E R S

TO THE

J E W S;

INVITING THEM TO

AN AMICABLE DISCUSSION OF THE EVIDENCES
OF CHRISTIANITY.

THE SECOND EDITION, WITH SOME ADDITIONS.

By JOSEPH PRIESTLEY, LL.D. F.R.S.

AC. IMP. PETROP. R. PARIS. HOLM. TAURIN. AUREL. MED.
PARIS. HARLEM. CANTAB. AMERIC. ET PHILAD. SOCIUS.

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THE
C O N T E N T S.

L E T T E R I.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THESE *Letters* are printed chiefly to be distributed among the Jews ; and if there should appear to be any prospect of their answering the end for which they were composed, they will be translated into *Hebrew*, for the use of learned Jews in all parts of the world, to engage them, if possible, in an amicable discussion of the subject.

It may be proper to observe, that the word *Christ*, in this work, is used only as a proper name, to denote the founder of the christian religion, and not, as synonymous to *Messiah*, though it was originally nothing more than a translation of that word into Greek.

Since the first edition of these *Letters*, I have published *Letters to Philosophical Unbelievers, Part II.* in which I have stated the evidence of the Jewish and christian religions jointly ; and therefore I wish the Jews would give particular attention to them, and consider them as an appendage to these *Letters*, addressed to themselves.

L E T T E R S

TO THE

J E W S.

L E T T E R I.

Of the peculiar Privileges of the Jewish Nation, and the Causes of their Prejudices against Christianity.

CHILDREN of the stock of Abraham, and heirs of the sure promises of God. Bear, I intreat you, with the serious address of a christian, who reverences your nation, is a believer in the future glory of it, and is a worshipper of the God of your fathers, without admitting any other to share in the rights of divinity with him.

I admire your persevering faith in the promises of God, notwithstanding the most

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dis-

discouraging appearances. In this you shew yourselves to be the worthy sons of the great patriarch from whom you are descended. You have suffered more than any other nation under heaven, but you justly believe it is no more than was foretold by your great prophet Moses, and what you have brought upon yourselves. And, believing in the equity of the divine proceedings, and in the veracity of that God, who has distinguished you as *his peculiar people*, you cannot entertain a doubt, but that whenever the cause of his displeasure is removed, he will turn from his fierce anger, and remember the covenant which he made with your fathers, to be *a God to them, and to their seed after them*. He will make a full end of all other nations, that shall persecute and oppress you, but *you* he will never utterly destroy. He will only correct you in measure, as we read, Jer. xxx. 11. xlv. 28.

Your dislike of christians, and your abhorrence of their faith, is not to be wondered at, when it is considered how
much

much you have suffered by their cruel oppressions, and how contrary their doctrines have been to the fundamental principles of your religion. You are the worshippers of the one living and true God. But, besides him, the generality of christians have paid divine honours to Jesus Christ, and in a great measure also to those dead men, whom they have called *Saints*; who were no more the proper objects of worship than images of wood and stone, the work of men's hands. But at this day the cruel usage you have met with from christian nations is happily much abated. Christians in general, and especially the more civilized among them, are disposed to treat you with equity and humanity; and if you *now* make enquiry into their faith, you will find that many of them have rejected, as abuses and corruptions of it, those doctrines which you so justly abhor.

Jesus Christ, who was of your nation, was a worshipper of the same God with yourselves. He taught his followers to worship the same great Being, and no other,

and to regard himself as their *master*, but as nothing more than the messenger and servant of God, a *prophet like unto Moses*; and the apostle Peter calls him, "*a man approved of God, by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him.*" Acts ii. 22. This rational doctrine prevails more and more among christians; and by reading the New Testament you will easily satisfy yourselves that there has been no more just reason why christians should pay divine honours to Christ, than your ancestors had to worship Moses.

For many ages your fathers were continually relapsing into idolatry. But God, in the course of his providence, has at length entirely cured you of the least propensity to it. In like manner he thought proper to permit christians to fall into similar idolatrous practises, but he is now opening their eyes, to shew them their abominations, and to bring them back to the worship of himself alone; that with us, as well as with you, *God may be one, and his name one.* Zech. iv. 9.

As

As I believe in the same God with yourselves, and worship and serve him only; so I, with some other christians, believe in the perpetual obligation of all the laws which Moses prescribed to your nation; and that circumcision, and other customs derived from your ancestors, were intended to distinguish you from all other nations, as *the peculiar people of God*, to the end of the world. Jesus Christ expressly said, Matt. v. 17. that "he came not to destroy the law, or
 " the prophets, but to fulfil them; and
 " that till heaven and earth pass away, one
 " jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from
 " the law." The apostle Paul saith that by faith in the gospel, "we do not make void
 " the law, but establish it." Rom. iii. 31. Both Christ and his apostles, being Jews, strictly conformed to all the rites of your religion, and taught the same to all other christian Jews, though they were authorized not to enjoin the same observances on christians of other nations. Had they done this, there would have been nothing to distin-

guish the posterity of Abraham from the rest of the world.

Since, therefore, well-informed christians believe in the same one, living, and true God, with yourselves, it may be hoped that our mutual prejudices will in time abate, and that you will be prevailed upon to attend with calmness to the reasons that may be laid before you, why you should believe in the divine mission of Christ, as well as in that of Moses, and consider his religion as designed to be a blessing to the gentile world as well as to you.

The same God is the benevolent father of us all, and he has given us equal powers of serving him, and being happy in his favour. We are all equally the subjects of his moral government here, and are by nature equally capable of being heirs of immortality hereafter. Permit us, therefore, to claim the title of your brethren, while we acknowledge you as *the elder branch* of the family, and do not envy you the preheminance that you are entitled to as such.

If

If you consider the tenor of all the promises of God to Abraham, and your great ancestors, you will find that none of them respect the favour of God in a future world, but only *in this*. And though you have had peculiar advantages for knowing and serving God; yet unless these be properly improved, having more to answer for than other nations, you will certainly subject yourselves to a greater condemnation. As God has never spared your nation whenever you have sinned, and revolted from him, but has always punished you, even with more severity than he has done other nations, who were less favoured by him in this world, the same will, no doubt, be the case in the world to come. If the respect that God has for your ancestors will exempt you from punishment hereafter, it certainly would have done so here.

To you, as the posterity of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, God has promised the possession of the land of Canaan. But your greatest and most honourable distinction is that, when all the rest of the world was

fallen into idolatry, and the abominable and horrid vices connected with it, God instructed you in the true knowledge and pure worship of himself, so that by means of your nation, that most important doctrine of the *divine unity*, has, together with the spirituality of his worship, been preserved in the world through all ages, even to this day.

You have been as *the salt of the earth*, and by the knowledge which has been diffused from you to other nations, it has been preserved from universal corruption. From your nation God has made choice of his prophets, by whom he has revealed his will, not to yourselves only, but to all his offspring of mankind. By Jesus Christ and his apostles, who were all Jews, he has taught his will to the whole world, *calling upon all men every where to repent* (Acts xvii. 30.) not that they may share in your peculiar privileges and honours here, but that they may obtain immortal happiness, together with all the virtuous of your nation, hereafter.

At

At present your nation is under the cloud of the divine displeasure, and therefore you have no prophets among you. But when you shall be obedient to God, and when, in consequence of it, he shall restore you to the possession of your own country, divine communications will be again imparted to you, and by you to the rest of the world, as we read in Isaiah ch. ii. 2. “ And it shall
 “ come to pass in the last days, that the
 “ mountain of the Lord’s house shall be es-
 “ tablished in the top of the mountain, and
 “ shall be exalted above the hills, and all
 “ nations shall flow unto it, and many
 “ people shall go, and say, Come ye, let us
 “ go up to the mountain of the Lord, to
 “ the house of the God of Jacob, and he
 “ will teach us of his ways, and we will
 “ walk in his paths. For out of Zion shall
 “ go forth the law, and the word of the
 “ Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall
 “ judge among the nations, and rebuke
 “ many people; and they shall beat their
 “ swords into plough-shares, and their
 “ spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall
 “ not

“ not lift up sword against nation, neither
“ shall they learn war any more.”

L E T T E R II.

*Of the present dispersed and calamitous State
of the Jewish Nation.*

I Rejoice exceedingly in the prospect of the glorious times announced in the prophecy quoted in my last letter, times so glorious for you, and so happy for all the world, and I trust that God is now disposing things in the course of his providence, so as to hasten their approach. But assure yourselves that till some obstacle, now existing, be removed by yourselves, those times of honour and prosperity to your nation cannot come. The promises of God are sure. “He is a
“ God of truth and without iniquity, just
“ and right is he,” Deut. xxxii. 4. And as surely as he threatened to expel you from
the

the Land of Canaan for your disobedience, and has executed his threatenings in the most dreadful manner, so surely will he fulfil his promise to restore you to it again, when you return to your obedience. But this is the indispensable condition of his favour, Attend to the word of God by Moses.

Deut. xxx. 1, &c. ‘ And it shall come to
 ‘ pass, when all these things are come upon
 ‘ thee, the blessing and the curse which I
 ‘ have set before thee, and thou shalt call
 ‘ them to mind, among all the nations whi-
 ‘ ther the Lord thy God hath driven thee,
 ‘ and shalt return unto the Lord thy God,
 ‘ and shalt obey his voice, according to all
 ‘ that I commanded thee this day, thou and
 ‘ thy children, with all thy heart, and with
 ‘ all thy soul ; that then the Lord thy God
 ‘ will turn thy captivity, and have compas-
 ‘ sion upon thee, and will return, and ga-
 ‘ ther thee from all the nations, whither the
 ‘ Lord thy God hath scattered thee. If any
 ‘ of thine be driven out unto the utmost
 ‘ parts of heaven, from thence will the Lord
 ‘ thy God gather thee, and from thence will
 ‘ he

‘ he fetch thee. And the Lord thy God will
‘ bring thee unto the land which thy fathers
‘ possessed, and thou shalt possess it, and he
‘ will do thee good, and multiply thee above
‘ thy fathers. And the Lord thy God will
‘ circumcise thine heart, and the heart of
‘ thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with
‘ all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that
‘ thou mayest live.’

Your present dispersed and calamitous situation is certainly a proof that you are *at this very time* under the divine displeasure. Otherwise his hand would not be so heavy upon you. Examine then impartially what is the real cause of it, and make it your business to remove it. The chief cause of God’s displeasure against you in former times, was your falling into idolatry : of this you were effectually cured by the Babylonish captivity. But another cause was the obstinacy and incredulity with which your ancestors were charged, when they were called a *stiff-necked and rebellious generation*, disobedient to the prophets whom God from time to time sent to them.

It is with reluctance that I bring these things to your remembrance, and only from a principle of sincere good-will to you. How many prophets of God were cruelly treated, and cut off, by your forefathers, as your scriptures testify? But their descendants repented of this, as we read in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, where you have an excellent pattern of national humiliation for national sins, and an account of the return of God's favour in consequence of it.

Bear with me, I intreat you, if, on this occasion, I remind you of a serious warning given you by Christ, which at the same time shows his prophetic spirit, and the true cause of your present sufferings. It was delivered in your temple, a few days before his death, Matt. xxi. 23, &c. "There
" was a certain householder, who planted a
" vineyard, and hedged it round about, and
" digged a wine-press in it, and built a
" tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and
" went into a far country. And when the
" time of the fruit drew near, he sent his
" servants

“servants to the husbandmen, that they
“might receive the fruits of it. And the
“husbandmen took his servants, and beat
“one, and killed another, and stoned an-
“other. Again, he sent other servants,
“more than the first, and they did unto
“them likewise. But last of all he sent
“unto them his son, saying, They will
“reverence my son. But when the hus-
“bandmen saw the son, they said among
“themselves, This is the heir, come, let us
“kill him, and let us seize on his inherit-
“ance. And they caught him, and cast
“him out of the vineyard, and slew him.
“When the Lord therefore of the vine-
“yard cometh, what will he do unto those
“husbandmen? They” (that is, your
Scribes and Pharisees, before whom he de-
livered this remarkable parable) “say unto
“him, He will miserably destroy those
“wicked men, and will let out his vine-
“yard to other husbandmen, who shall
“render him the fruits in their seasons.”
—Our Saviour afterwards added (ver. 43)
“Therefore the kingdom of God shall be
“taken

“ taken from you, and given to a nation
“ bringing forth the fruits thereof.” Has
not this prophecy been as awefully fulfilled
as that of Moses ?

The continuance of your calamities shows
that the cause of the divine displeasure
against you is not only something wrong
done by your ancestors, but also something
that is approved, and persisted in, by your-
selves : and it is not for immoralities of
a common kind that God punishes you
with so much severity. For other nations
have been, in these respects, as wicked as
you ; but no nation ever suffered as you
have done.

It is in vain to allege that you are now
suffering for all the sins of your ancestors
from the beginning of your nation, and even
for that of the golden calf. God expressly
says, Exod. xx. 5. that he visiteth the ini-
quities of the fathers upon the children to
the *third or fourth generation* only ; whereas
many generations have passed since you have
been wholly expelled from the land of Ca-
naan. Besides, you were punished for all
your

your sins prior to the Babylonish captivity, by that captivity. Your restoration to your country is a proof of that ; and God would not punish you again, and at the distance of so many ages, and with so much more severity, for the same offences.

Consider also, that a captivity of seventy years only, without any peculiar hardships during the continuance of it, was deemed a sufficient punishment for all your offences committed before that period ; whereas you have experienced unspeakably greater calamities, and of much longer continuance, since the promulgation of christianity, than the amount of all your sufferings previous to it. Besides, you have sufficiently repented of your ill usage of all the preceding prophets, and nothing more is requisite to obtain the divine forgiveness, and the return of his favour.

Be not, therefore, offended, if, with great sincerity, but with equal affection, I must observe, that, according to appearances, there is no other cause of God's displeasure against you besides your rejection and persecution

secution of the prophets of your own nation, Christ and the apostles, who were sent to you in the first place, and who confined their instructions to your nation, till, being rejected by you, they were directed to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. This circumstance contributed to inflame the hatred of your ancestors against the preachers of the gospel, and against the gospel itself; and the same spirit (so hostile to the gospel, and to God, if he be the author of it, and which must necessarily have excited his displeasure against you) has actuated your nation, in a greater or less degree, in all ages, even to this day. But when, duly humbled and instructed by your afflictions, you shall be more disposed to hear, and attend to, the voice of God speaking to you by his servants, so that some of you, at least, shall shew a better disposition towards christianity (which does not at all interfere with your attachment to the laws of Moses) he may have mercy upon you; and your complete conversion may, perhaps, be reserved till your return to the land of Canaan. For the sake of a *righteous*

few, God may have compassion on *the many*. But he only knows what his own secret purposes are. Of this we may be satisfied, that "the Judge of all the earth will do that which is right" (Gen. xviii. 25.) and least of all will he be unjust to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

L E T T E R III.

Of the historical Evidences of the divine Mission of Christ.

REVIEW, I intreat you, the history of the times in which the gospel was published, and the conduct of your ancestors in them; and you will find that they rejected those who came to them from God, bringing the same testimonials of a divine mission that Moses and the preceding prophets had brought before them. For, like them, they also did what no men could have done, if God had not been with them.

They

They healed all diseases by a word speaking, they even raised the dead, and Christ himself rose from the dead after he had been publicly crucified.

As a true prophet, Christ foretold the dreadful calamities which befel your nation in that generation, and with the truest sympathy he even shed tears on the prospect of them. Thus we read in one of our gospels, written before the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, Luke xix. 41. " And " when he was come near, he beheld the " city, and wept over it, saying, If thou " hadst known, even thou, at least in this " thy day, the things which belong unto " thy peace! But now they are hid from " thine eyes. For the days shall come " upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast " a trench about thee, and compass thee " round, and keep thee in on every side, " and shall lay thee even with the ground, " and thy children within thee; and they " shall not leave in thee one stone upon " another, because thou knewest not the " time of thy visitation."

That Christ performed miracles, your ancestors, who saw them, did not deny ; but they weakly ascribed some of the most remarkable of them to the aid of Beelzebub ; and it has since been said by your writers, that he performed his miracles by means of some ineffable name of God, which he stole out of the temple.

I will not affront your understandings so much as to refute such pretences as these. If God could permit Christ to impose upon your nation, and the world, in this manner, he might have suffered Moses to do the same, and there could be no guard against the grossest impostures. Assure yourselves, therefore, that God, the God of your fathers, could never suffer your nation to be deceived in this manner. The powers of nature will never be controuled but by the God of nature, and by persons actually commissioned and empowered by him.

Think not that I wish to undervalue the evidence for the divine mission of Moses. I give as firm an assent to it as any of yourselves can do. The history of Moses is
most

most essentially different from the fabulous histories of Greece and Rome; his history having been written in the age in which he lived, and the history of your nation having been continued without interruption from that time to what is universally allowed to be the time of certain history, and in such a manner as that the connexion gives the highest credibility to the whole.

Such a history as yours could never have been *received* as true, in the age of Moses itself, and in all following ages, if it had not been so. Your nation, which by its long continuance in Egypt had acquired a fondness for its superstitions, was exceedingly averse to the laws and constitutions of Moses, and therefore would never have been brought to submit to them, if they had not been persuaded, by evidence in which they could not be deceived, that they were prescribed by God.

The evidence for the divine mission of Moses was, I say, of such a nature, as that it was impossible that your ancestors should

have been imposed upon with respect to it. The miracles were not things done in the presence of a few interested witnesses, but in that of both Egyptians and Israelites. Your whole nation walked on dry land through the Red Sea, and through the channel of the river Jordan. They all heard the voice of God speaking to them distinctly (not a single articulate word only, but all the Ten Commandments) from mount Sinai, and they were fed with manna from heaven forty years. In things of this public nature no people could be imposed upon.

It is not, indeed, possible to account for your ancestors (who were not in other respects more knowing than the rest of the world, and who were inferior in science to the Egyptians and Babylonians) having a more perfect knowledge of God, and a purer method of worship than other nations had, but on the supposition of their having been favoured with such divine communications as your history gives an account of. Where but in your scriptures, in all the periods of
anti-

antiquity, and in the most polished nations, shall we find such compositions as those which are contained in your book of Psalms? It is in vain that we look for such sentiments of reverence for the universal providence, and righteous government of one living and true God in any hymns composed by writers of other nations. A religion so authenticated as yours, is certainly intitled to your most zealous attachment.

But it is not sufficient to obey *one* messenger of God only, and disregard others, who come with the same commission. The reverence which your ancestors had for Moses did not excuse them when they rejected Elijah, Jeremiah, and others whom God sent. If, therefore, John the Baptist and Jesus Christ, were actually sent to you with a commission from God; if they and the apostles were really *prophets*, your adherence to Moses and the other prophets will not excuse your rejection of them. For it is a rejection of the authority of God, by whom they were sent.

Now, without any disparagement to the evidence for the divine mission of Moses, that of Christ may be shewn to be even clearer and stronger, at least to us at this day ; because the history of his miracles is more within the limits of certain history.

Are the books of Moses genuine, the real production of the age in which the events recorded in them are said to have taken place ? So are our four gospels, and the book of Acts. For they also may be traced up to the time in which the events recorded in them happened, so that they could never have been received as they were, if it had not been well known that the particulars contained in them were true.

Were your forefathers so disposed that they would not have submitted to the institutions of Moses, without the most satisfactory evidence, that they were prescribed to them by God ? The apostles also, and thousands of your countrymen, in the age of Christ, were no less averse to receive such doctrines as those which he taught them. Would they have received such a person as Jesus, a crucified

cified malefactor, a dead man, for their Messiah, if the clear evidence of the miracles wrought by him in his life-time, and especially that of his resurrection from the dead, had not compelled them to it? They were no less attached to the opinion of the Messiah being a great prince and a conqueror than you are at this day. But being men of ingenuous minds, they not only abandoned that favourite doctrine, but every thing dear to them in the world, and even life itself, for the sake of truth and a good conscience.

If you examine the particulars of the miracles of Christ, you will find that, though none of them can be said to vie with some of those recorded by Moses in point of *splendour* and *magnitude*; yet, that with respect to *notoriety*, and *frequency*, they were abundantly sufficient to shew, that there could be no trick or collusion in the case; and most of them were such as also mark the great benevolence of his character. He healed the sick; and not one or two only, but, during a great part of his public ministry, he went about healing all that
were

were brought to him, and especially diseases of the most obstinate kinds, which seldom yield to any medical treatment, and such as, if ever they be cured, it is only in a long course of time, as palsies, leprosies, lunacies, and cases of blindness. He raised no less than three persons from the dead, and two of them in the presence of a great number of persons, his enemies as well as his friends.

A miracle something similar to that of your forefathers being fed with manna, was his feeding first five thousand, and afterwards four thousand men, besides women and children, with a small quantity of provision. With respect to a mere command of the powers of nature, what could shew it more than his stilling a tempest, or his walking on the sea, in which there could be no artifice by which the spectators could be imposed upon? And though after his resurrection, he did not appear to all the people, he was repeatedly seen and examined by numbers of those who were best acquainted with him, and at one time by more than five hundred persons at once. At first his
disciples

disciples had no expectation of ever seeing him again, and therefore could not have been pre-disposed to believe the fact; and afterwards they had leisure to converse with him, and examine him as particularly as they pleased; and in the presence of a great number of them he ascended into heaven. After this he appeared to one of the most inveterate enemies of his religion, Saul of Tarsus, who, being thereby convinced of the truth of christianity, became a zealous preacher of it. Read the history, and you must perceive that it bears, in all respects, as evident marks of truth as that of Moses.

The obstinacy and incredulity of your nation in general, in the time of our Saviour and the apostles, may be satisfactorily accounted for on the principles of human nature, over which motives of interest, ambition, and revenge, have often more influence than all other considerations. How often did the great body of your nation revolt from their allegiance to God, notwithstanding the clear and frequent proofs of his interposition? Within a very few days after
the

the most express command, given from the mouth of God himself, in an audible voice from mount Sinai, forbidding them to make any graven image, they made a golden calf, and bowed down before it.

Is it then any thing very extraordinary, that, chagrined as your ancestors were, disappointed in the humble appearance of Jesus, and stung by his severe, though just reproofs of their hypocrisy and other vices, they were so far from hearkening to him, that they apprehended him, and put him to death; and that they persisted in wreaking their vengeance on his followers? It is but too natural for interested, ambitious, and irritated men, to act as they did. But that Jesus, who was so unlike what was expected of the Messiah, should have been received in that character by such numbers of your countrymen, cannot be accounted for but on the supposition that they had received the fullest satisfaction that his claim was well founded.

It is, indeed, hardly possible to account for the very *pretensions* of Jesus himself, on
any

any principles but the fullest conviction in his own mind, that God had sent him. He was a man of virtue and integrity if ever there was one ; and, as appears by his whole history, he was no wild enthusiast, but of a very cool and temperate mind. Being a Jew as well as yourselves, he would naturally have the same notion of the Messiah that other Jews of his age had, and which you retain to this day. What then could have given him an idea of a *spiritual*, instead of a *temporal kingdom* ? And what could have supported him under the terror of a violent death, to which he voluntarily surrendered himself, and which in his coolest moments he frequently expressed his deliberate intention of doing, in full confidence of being soon raised to life again, but the firmest persuasion that God was with him, and would carry him through his arduous undertaking ?

Had Jesus been an impostor, like others by whom you have been imposed upon since, he would certainly have availed himself of the popular prejudices, instead of op-

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posing them. He would have courted the leading men of his country, and not have irritated them against him ; or at least would have secured a sufficient number of partizans among the common people ; and at several periods of his history, and especially in the week in which he was crucified, they were much disposed in his favour. But he always himself opposed every attempt to make him a king.

If he had not been a good man, as well as fully persuaded of his divine mission, he would naturally have assumed the title and rank of a *king*, in order to gain followers ; and having no expectation of a spiritual kingdom, or of any reward in another life, he would never have been so foolish, or so mad, as to have submitted to die, when it was in his power to make his escape. For when those who were sent to apprehend him were struck with awe, and *fell backward to the ground* (John xviii. 6.) he encouraged them, and voluntarily went with them, though he knew it was to certain death.

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Had the scheme been that of the apostles, after the death of Christ (as the object of it must have been their own emolument or honour) they certainly made a very unnatural choice of a head, to whom all the honour was given; a man whose influence, whatever it was, must have expired with him, and whose name, as that of a crucified malefactor could have been no credit to them. Besides, it is highly improbable that they, whose ambition led them to dispute, as we find they did, about precedency while their master was living, should live in the most perfect harmony, and jointly carry on the same scheme, after his death, with no bond of truth and integrity to keep them together?

Consider then, I beseech you, the history of Christ, which is as authentic as that of Moses, or that of any of your prophets. The transactions of it, and of the period which followed it, were not things *done in a corner* (Acts xxvi. 26.) And consider whether, as men of reason and understanding, you can account for the reception of christianity in so great a part of the world, and especially

especially by so many of your countrymen, and for its continuing to gain ground, and establish itself, notwithstanding the most violent opposition, both from the heads of your nation, and all the other powers of the world, on any other supposition than that of its having come from God.

Jesus Christ was not such a man as Mahomet, who pretended to no miracle besides the composition of the Koran (which it certainly does not exceed the capacity of man to write) and who propagated his religion by the sword. Christ and the apostles appealed to miracles of the most public nature, and had no means of propagating their religion but the evidence of its truth.

I have carefully perused the most celebrated of your writers against christianity, and I do not find in any of them a due examination of the *historical evidence* for it. They have contented themselves with saying in general, that christianity was received by very few of your countrymen, and those the lowest of the people; and that even among the gentiles, the professors of it were not numerous before

fore it was established by the power of Constantine.

Now a slight acquaintance with history would convince you that this was far from being the truth of the case. The history of the book of Acts (the authority of which was never disputed, any more than that of the books of Moses) shews that there were many thousands of christian Jews in Jerusalem itself, presently after the death and resurrection of Christ, and many of them of considerable rank. And, according to other, the most authentic, accounts, there appears to have been a large body of Jewish christians (generally called *Ebionites*) residing chiefly in Syria, whither they had retired upon the approach of the Jewish war; and there were even several considerable writers among them. Of these I shall only mention Hegesippus, who wrote the history of the christian church, in continuation of the book of Acts; and Symmachus, who, besides translating the Old Testament into Greek, wrote a Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew, in which he undertook to refute the story

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of the miraculous conception. They were also learned Jewish christians of whom Jerom learned the Hebrew tongue.

As to the christian Gentiles, it is well known that they were exceedingly numerous in all parts of the Roman empire; that they did not in general consist of the lowest of the people, but had among them many persons of wealth, rank, and character, and that they endured several severe persecutions before the time of Constantine. Besides, how could this emperor, in a period which was full of civil dissension, and who, having had many competitors to contend with, must have had many more to fear, have safely changed the public religion of the Roman empire, if the minds of the people had not been well prepared for it, by their general profession, or at least good opinion, of christianity?

Now what we maintain is, that this state of things (which no person acquainted with history can deny) could not have taken place without such evidence of the miracles and resurrection of Christ, as it was not in the

power of those who had the best opportunity of enquiring into it, to resist.

In order to form a right judgment with respect to those facts on which the truth of christianity depends, permit me to observe, that you must not (as too many of you, I perceive, do) confine yourselves to the reading of books written by your countrymen, but give due attention to Greek and Roman literature; by which only you can form a just idea of the state of things in the times in which christianity was promulgated. It is well known that there are no Hebrew writings of that period now extant. But other nations have had writers, and historians, as well as yours; and they are intitled to credit in proportion to the marks of *good information*, and of *veracity* which they bear. Read then with attention the writings of the age in which christianity was promulgated, and any others that are able to throw light upon it, and consider who they were that *received* christianity, and who they were that *rejected* it. This, I am per-

suaded, will satisfy you, that the work was of God, and therefore that it was in vain that the rulers of your nation, and of the world opposed it.

L E T T E R IV.

Of the Doctrine concerning the Messiah.

YOU say that whatever miracles might have been wrought by Christ and his apostles, he could not be your *Messiah*, because he did not bear the proper characters of the Messiah, as they are laid down in the prophets. But I earnestly beg that you would re-consider those prophecies, and what is really said of the person who is distinguished by the title of *the Messiah*, or the anointed messenger of God. That particular title is not used (except by Isaiah, who gives it to Cyrus) by any of your prophets

prophets before Daniel, who applies it to a person who was to be *cut off*, and who assigns a term for that event, which must have been elapsed many centuries ago (Dan. ix. 24.) For *seventy weeks* (or a period consisting of as many years as seventy weeks contain days) from *the command to rebuild Jerusalem*, which was then in ruins, must, on any computation, have expired about the time of Christ.

Your Rabbi Isaac, in his celebrated treatise intitled the *Bulwark of the Faith*, says, that the seventy weeks of Daniel are a period of four hundred and ninety years, to be reckoned from the word of God to Jeremiah concerning the return from the Babylonish captivity, or from the destruction of the temple by Nebuchadnezzar, to its destruction by Titus. (Section 42). He also says, that *Messiah, the prince*, in the former part of the prophecy means Cyrus, who is called the Messiah, or *the anointed*, by Isaiah; and that by the Messiah who is to be *cut off*, in the latter part of the prophecy, is meant the last king of the Jews, or Agrippa the

younger, who is said by a spurious Josephus (never quoted by any writer before the twelfth century) to have been killed by Vespasian before the taking of the city.

But, to mention no more objections to this hypothesis, from the destruction of the temple by Nebuchadnezzar to that by Titus was a period of more than six hundred and fifty years; and king Agrippa was not cut off at all, but probably ended his days peaceably at Rome, as may be collected from the best accounts of him. Besides, the Messiah mentioned in the two parts of the same prophecy, is, no doubt, the same person, whoever he was; and if this be not your *proper Messiah*, where do you find him announced at all, *by name*, in any prophecy whatever?

On the other hand, Oratio, in his dissertation with Limborch, maintained that the Messiah of Daniel was the first high-priest, who lived together with, and after, Nehemiah. But it is not at all necessary to shew how ill this idea corresponds to the language of the prophecy.

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The mistake which, for wise purposes, God has suffered you to fall into, has arisen from your not having distinguished between this *suffering Messiah*, and that *prince of the house of David*, under whom you are to enjoy the great prosperity that is promised to you *in the latter days*. All the temporal glory that you expect, will certainly be your lot; and the Messiah that you look for will come. For it is not the *name*, but the *character* that is to be regarded. But if you admit the *divine mission* of Jesus, you cannot object to his claim of being that suffering *Messiah*, announced by the prophets.

Your future glory is distinctly foretold by many of the prophets. It is even the great burden of prophecy from Abraham to Zechariah. But it must come in its proper time. And while you continue obstinately to resist God, in rejecting those whom he sent unto you, and cherish a temper of mind so utterly unworthy of the high rank that is destined for you, I do not see how it can be consistent with the prophecies that you should be in any other state

than that most unhappy one in which you now are.

You expect that your Messiah will be lineally descended from David, and therefore you cannot be reconciled to the idea of Jesus being that Messiah, because christians say that he had no human father; so that according to your rules of genealogy, he could not be said to be *the son of David*. But it is no where said that the person who is characterized by the title of *Messiah*, should be descended from David, but only that *prince* under whom you are to enjoy your temporal prosperity.

However, the history of the miraculous conception of Jesus does not appear to me to be sufficiently authenticated. The evidence of it is by no means the same with that of his public life, his miracles, his death, and resurrection, which are all that the truth of christianity requires (and of which there were many witnesses) and the original gospel of Matthew, received by your countrymen, did not contain it.

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Your sacred books, as well as ours, being written by *men*, neither of them can be expected to be entirely free from mistakes, or exempt from interpolations. Yours, as you must acknowledge, have, in a course of time, suffered in these respects. But it is sufficient for us both, that the great events, on which every thing that is of importance to our religion depends, are true. As to any thing that is not necessarily connected with such events, and therefore is not supported by their evidence, we should think ourselves at liberty to receive or reject it, according to its *separate evidence*. Myself, and many other christians, are no believers in the miraculous conception of Jesus, but are of opinion, that he was the legitimate son of Joseph, who was of the family of David; and such seems to have been the opinion of the great body of Jewish christians, who had more opportunity of informing themselves concerning the fact than the gentiles had. But we are not less firm believers in all the public transactions of the life of Jesus, in his miracles, his death, and
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his resurrection; and consequently, in his divine mission. With respect to his supposed miraculous conception, and other articles relating to christianity, but not essential to it, do you examine and judge for yourselves.

L E T T E R V.

Miscellaneous Observations, and Conclusion.

SOME of you may perhaps say, that you cannot enter into any discussion concerning the evidence of christianity, till the different professors of it shall agree among themselves, and tell you what it really is. But this demand would be manifestly unreasonable; because it is very possible that christianity may be true, though many persons should hold wrong opinions concerning it. You Jews held very different opinions concerning many things relating to your law. But does this circumstance prove that it has no foundation in truth?

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There is not, indeed, any subject of human speculation, with respect to which different men have not maintained different opinions. But would you think it wise in any person to refuse to study the law, or medicine, or philosophy, till all the professors of these sciences were agreed about the principles of them?

Besides, all christians are agreed with respect to the great articles of their faith. They all maintain that Jesus had a divine mission, evidenced by his miracles and resurrection; that he was the person announced by your prophets under the character of *the Messiah*; and that, though he is ascended to heaven, he will come again to raise the dead, and judge the world. Admit the truth of these articles only, and we shall readily acknowledge you to be christians. As you acknowledge any man to be a believer in the religion of Moses, who admits his divine mission; nothing is requisite to denominate any person a christian, but his believing the divine mission of Christ.

If it stagger you to think that christianity should have been so corrupted, as it
must

must have been if my ideas of it be just ; I beg leave to refer you to my *History of the Corruptions of Christianity*, in which you will find the origin and progress of them, I flatter myself, satisfactorily accounted for, without implying any reflection on christianity itself. And if you wish to have a more particular account of the origin of the doctrine of the *trinity*, at which you are so justly scandalized, I refer you to my *History of early Opinions concerning Jesus Christ*, in which you will see a full account of the rise and progress of that doctrine, with all the changes it has undergone, from its source in the Platonic philosophy to the present day.

You may, however, say, that christians are so much divided among themselves, that you do not know which denomination of them you can join. But the same may be said concerning your religion. For there are different sects among you, and you differ in the interpretation of your scriptures as we do in that of ours.

Besides, there is no occasion for you Jews to connect yourselves with any class of christians.

tians. On the contrary, since you are still to be distinguished as *Jews*, no less than as *christians*, it will be more convenient for you to form a separate church, and to keep your sabbath as you now do. There are some christians who observe the seventh day as well as yourselves, and we consider this circumstance as making no schism in the christian church. All the antient Jewish christians observed the seventh day for the purpose of public worship.

It has pleased divine providence, for wise ends, no doubt, to permit both your religion and ours to be grossly corrupted. Many things have been added to your Law entirely foreign to it; and this has also been the case with christianity. To the simple doctrine of the gospel have been added such opinions (borrowed from heathen philosophy) as are utterly discordant with its genuine principles, especially that of the divinity of Christ; though the New Testament no more represents him as a God, than the Old Testament does Moses. But, as I have said, there are many christians who hold
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that doctrine, and that of the *trinity*, in as much abhorrence as you can do.

By all means read the New Testament for yourselves, and examine it with impartiality. It will be best understood by means of its connexion with the Old, as it consists of books written by your countrymen, to whom your scriptures, and the language in which they are written, were familiar; so that the phraseology is very much the same in both. You will find the historical books, which are those of the greatest importance, written with the same simplicity with those of the Old Testament, by men of the greatest integrity and piety, who, like your sacred writers, do not conceal their own faults, or those of their friends; and very far will you be from perceiving in them any marks of artifice, or of a design to impose upon their readers, if it had been in their power, which it evidently was not.

An impartial perusal of these books, with an allowance for such oversights as are incident to all writers, those of your scriptures not excepted, cannot but give you a favourable

able impression of the characters of Christ and the apostles, and dispose you to give more attention to the evidence of their mission from God. But, by all means, as becomes men of reason and religion, endeavour to divest yourselves of that extreme abhorrence with which you have generally regarded our religion, under the influence of which it will be impossible for you to form any right judgment. Such an extreme prejudice as many of you have shown to the very name of *christianity* must incapacitate persons for judging rightly concerning any subject whatever.

It is your belief, no less than it is mine, that God brings good out of all evil, and that he only permits the evil for the sake of the good that is connected with it. Even the general unbelief of your nation, which is so much to be lamented in some respects, has had its use with regard to the credibility of the gospel history. Had the great body of your nation, and especially the rulers of it, in the time of Christ, or that of his apostles, embraced christianity; as it was a religion which sprung up among your-
selves

selves, it would have been said, at this day, that it was a contrivance of those who had it in their power to impose upon the common people, and to make them believe whatever they pleased; and that your scriptures, which bear testimony to Christ, had been altered to favour the imposture. Whereas the violent opposition which your nation in general, and the rulers of it, made to christianity, and which has continued to the present day, will for ever put it out of the power of unbelievers to say, that it was a scheme which the founders of it carried on in concert with any human powers. The work was not of man, but of God. It was founded on truth, and the gates of death cannot prevail against it. Matt. xvi. 18.

But if your temporary unbelief has answered so valuable a purpose, a much greater, and a more happy one may be expected from your conversion to christianity, at the present, or some future time; when with that will be connected your restoration to the divine favour, your re-settlement in your own country, and that glorious and prosperous state in it which is certainly reserved

served for you. This will be such a fulfilment of a long train of prophecy, now existing, in your sacred books and ours, and which therefore can never be said to have been made after the event, as must silence all incredulity, and establish the pure worship of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to the end of time.

Even the corruption of christianity, and that degree of unbelief in it which has been the consequence of that corruption, will likewise appear, we cannot doubt, to have had its use, viz. to make us examine our principles, in order to distinguish what is *true* from what is *false*. By this means we shall be better acquainted with the real nature and value of christianity, and yield a better grounded, and more unwavering assent to it, than we could have done, if we had only received it from our ancestors, without any examination of our own. It is a knowledge of the opposition that has been made to any system, and of the power of truth in overcoming that opposition, that can alone give a firm establishment to our faith in it.

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We therefore owe infinite obligation to your nation for upbraiding us, as you have never ceased to do, with paying divine honours to Jesus Christ, and making a trinity in the divine nature, and consequently with being *idolaters*.

It has been one principal means of making the more inquisitive among us to consider whether the heinous charge was a just one; and the consequence has been, that we have found it to be so. You had reason on your side, and we yield to it. With the same candour, do you also examine whether we have not, in other respects, reason on our side also, and submit to *that*, not to *us*, who are only the means in the hand of providence of holding it out to you.

If you will examine impartially what christianity really *is*, and not what it has been *represented* to be, you will find in it nothing at which your minds ought to revolt. It is perfectly consistent with all the zeal you now have for the law of Moses, though it is hostile to the additions which the Scribes and Pharisees among you have made to it, and which no person, except
one

one authorized by God for the purpose, had any right to make.

Christianity inculcates as fully as Moses himself, the doctrines of the *divine unity*, and that of his placability to returning penitents, and it asserts with peculiar clearness and energy that fundamental article of all practical religion, the revelation of a *future life*, rectifying some mistakes into which your ancestors seem to have fallen with respect to it. But, whether you be offended or not, christianity opens the gates of heaven to all the gentile world.

This doctrine, however, is by no means inconsistent with any thing contained in your scriptures, but, on the contrary, is really implied in them. For there we read that Enoch, Noah, Job, and many others, enjoyed the favour of God (and they will no doubt be happy in a future state) though they lived before the publication of the law of Moses, or even the appointment of circumcision. It is evident, therefore, that these rites are not, in their own nature, necessary to acceptance with God. Nay, Abraham himself became the friend and

favourite of God before he was circumcised : and neither he, nor Isaac, nor Jacob, were acquainted with the peculiar laws of Moses. Why then should you think it inconsistent with any maxim in the government of God, that he should be disposed to make all the sincerely pious and virtuous happy ?

Your peculiar ritual cannot, from the nature of it, be observed by all mankind. It is only adapted to a country of small extent, but sufficient, and properly situated, to be the head of all countries, and where your nation will reign as *kings and priests* unto God, receiving the homage of all other nations, and presenting offerings to God on their behalf. If a situation like this does not gratify your highest ambition, you encourage an ambition of a very preposterous and improper kind, inconsistent with the happiness of all other nations, and indeed with that of your own. But can you really think that God made all the gentile nations to be your slaves and vassals, and did not rather intend that your preheminance should have for its object in the great plan of providence, the happiness of the whole world ?

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The head, though the most honourable member of the body, is calculated to be subservient to the whole system. The family of Aaron supplies you with priests, but it is for the use of all the twelve tribes; and the family of David gives you kings, but for the happiness of the nation at large. In like manner, your whole nation is to be the head of all the nations of the earth, in order to its being the medium of communicating happiness to all mankind, who are equally the offspring of God, and the care of his providence, with yourselves.— Let then this great, this rational, and desirable preheminance content you, and let all idea of opposition, and difference of interest, cease. We will receive and honour you as our elder brethren, in the great family of God. Acknowledge us as your younger brethren.

Your nation is the great object towards which our eyes are directed. From the call of Abraham, you have been the chief instrument in the hands of God of instructing mankind in the great truths of religion. Your sufferings have had the same object

with your prosperity; and having now, we hope, nearly answered their end, may the God of heaven, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God whom we christians as well as you Jews worship (and whom we have learned of you to worship) be graciously pleased to put an end to them, gather you from among all nations, as he has promised, re-settle you in your own country, the land of Canaan, and, under princes of the family of David, make you the most illustrious, as you are now the most despised, of all the nations of the earth.

With my most earnest prayers for your happiness, temporal and spiritual, I am,

Your brother in the worship

Of the one only true God,

JOSEPH PRIESTLEY.

P. S. I am far from flattering myself that the little which I have now advanced should, of itself, make any of you converts to christianity. My utmost hope is, that it may be the means of drawing your attention to the subject, and especially to the study of
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your scriptures and ours in conjunction; that you may judge for yourselves whether there be reason in what I have advanced, or not. Your conversion must be the result of your own diligent study, and impartial enquiry, with the blessing of God. In order to contribute the little that may be in my power to so desirable an event, I shall be very happy to hear what any of your learned men may object to my state of the evidences of christianity in this small tract; and I do assure you that I will consider your objections with the greatest attention. Let us then freely confer and reason together on the subject; and if we should not entirely convince one another, we shall at least have an opportunity of shewing our candour and good will.

You will please to take particular notice, that my chief object (besides shewing that the proper characters of the person who is distinguished in your prophecies by the title of *Messiah* apply to Jesus Christ, and to no other) is to convince you that the *proper*, that is the *historical evidence* for the miracles of Christ is of the very same kind with that

to which you must have recourse, in order to prove the truth of those of Moses, and, upon the whole, more strong and satisfactory. If therefore, it be in your power to persuade a heathen, that God really spake to your ancestors by Moses; by the force of exactly similar arguments, you ought to acknowledge that the same great Being spake by Christ and the apostles; and on whatever principles you reject the evidence of christian miracles, any person will be justified in rejecting those on which the truth of your own religion rests.

Diligently, then, compare the historical-evidence of the two religions. Both, you will find, are, in reality, but one. They are perfectly consistent with, nay, they imply, each other, and must stand or fall together.

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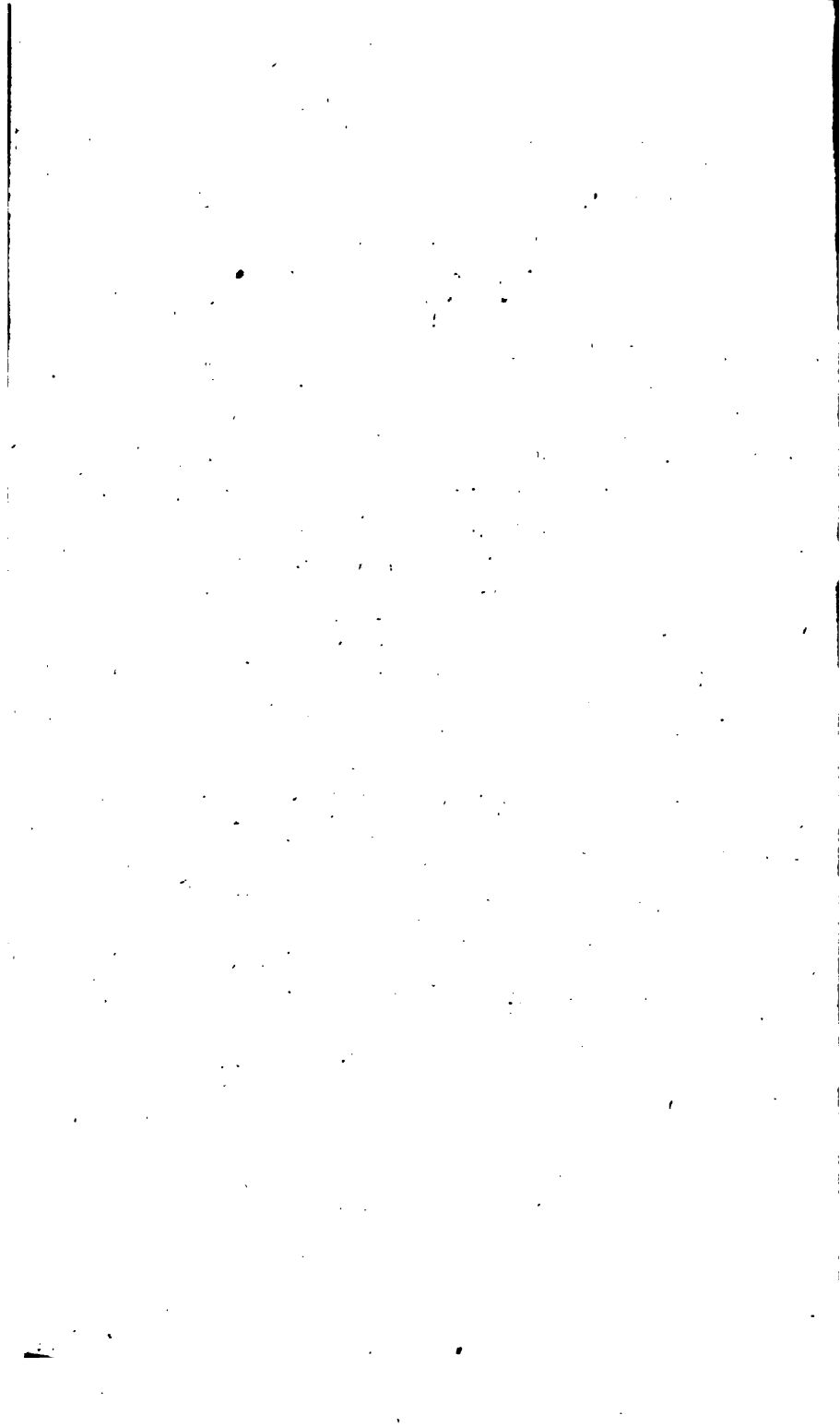
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INVITING THEM TO
AN AMICABLE DISCUSSION
OF THE EVIDENCES OF
C H R I S T I A N I T Y.

BY DAVID LEVI,
AUTHOR OF LINGUA SACRA, THE CEREMONIES OF THE JEWS, &c.

שקר הנביאים בבאים בשמי לא שלוחתים ולא צותנם
ולא דברתי אליהם

JEREM. xiv. 14.

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Advertisement.

THE AUTHOR of the following sheets, sincerely hopes, that the Reader will view the undertaking with a candid eye; and not construe any part thereof; as reflecting upon what may be called true Christianity. What he has advanced, is, in support of a religion given by God himself; (although some Christians think, that it is no longer acceptable to him) and that, not till after a SOLEMN INVITATION, from an eminent Divine and Philosopher to the whole nation, as a preliminary step towards their conversion. The Author, (who is a sincere inquirer after truth,) has in consequence thereof, accepted the invitation, in order to convince, or be convinced, if PERMITTED to proceed in the inquiry.

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with that of MOSES.*

Page 70

An introductory Letter.

REV. SIR,

THE perusal of your Letters addressed to the Jews, (put into my hand by a worthy friend) hath afforded me much satisfaction, to find so able a Divine and Philosopher, acknowledge the *unity* of God; and who, at the same time, thinks there is some merit in the persevering faith of the Jewish nation, in “ the promises of God, notwithstanding the most discouraging appearances.”

But this, Sir, is no more than our duty, and what we inherit from the great patriarch Abraham, from whom we are descended; for of him it is recorded, “ And he believed in the Lord, and he counted it to him for righteousness*.” And therefore,

* Genesis xv. 6.

having

having so bright an example continually before us, we cannot, without being highly culpable, and rendering ourselves utterly unworthy the attention of the Supreme Being, entertain the least doubt of his Justice and Equity. And, as all the calamities that were to befall our nation, in consequence of our transgressing the LAW, as foretold by that great prophet*, and divine legislator, Moses†, have been fulfilled in all respects; consequently, those great and glorious promises also foretold by the same prophet†, must likewise have their full completion.

But the exact time of this accomplishment is not known to any, save the eternal God himself; as Moses, speaking in

* He is emphatically styled, by way of eminence, by the Jewish writers, אֲדֹנָי הַנְּבִיאִים; that is, The Lord, or Master of the Prophets.

† Levit. xxvi. 14, &c. and Deut. xviii. 15, &c.

† “ And yet for all that, when they be in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break my covenant with them: for I am the Lord their God.” Levit. xxvi. 44.

the

the name of God, emphatically expresses it in his prophetic poem, Deut. xxxii. 34. “ *Is not this laid up in store with me, and sealed up among my treasures ?*” that is, it is as secret from all eyes, as the contents of a letter before the seal is broken. And in nearly the same sense, does the prophet Isaiah express himself. “ *I the Lord will hasten it in his time*.*”

These prophecies, Sir, are our consolation in this long, and dreadful captivity, and have been our support, in enabling us to bear up against the many grievous and miserable persecutions, we have suffered from both *Infidels* and *Christians*. And hence it is demonstrable, that the calculators of the time of the coming of the Messiah, (and which, they say, must have been elapsed many centuries ago; and therefore, exult over us, as if God had totally cast us off, and there was no hope left for Israel,) have been most egregiously mistaken, as will be clearly shewn here-

* Isa. lx. 22.

after,

-in
 after, in answer to your fourth letter: for as you have invited our nation to an amicable discussion of the evidences of Christianity, I shall endeavour to answer what you have advanced in behalf of your doctrine, as far as the extent of my abilities, and the little time I have to spare from my other avocations, will permit, as most of our learned men, (as I am informed) have declined the invitation; and that, as I understand, for two reasons: first, on account of the aversion which the elders of our community have towards any of their body entering into religious disputes, for fear, that any thing advanced by them, might be construed as reflecting on, or tending to disturb the national religion, as by law established. This hath always, hitherto, been studiously avoided, by all those of our nation, in all parts of their dispersion; for we endeavour strictly to abide by the admonition of the prophet*, as may be observed by the form
 of

* And seek the peace of the city, whither I have caused
 you

of prayer composed for the Royal Family*. Second, the generality of our learned men being foreigners, are deficient in the proper idiom and phraseology of the English language; consequently, are not able to enter the lists against so spirited and elegant a writer.

These, Sir, are the reasons. As to the first, I think it groundless: for although they might justly have been apprehensive of the consequence of such disputes in the dark ages of Popery when, on the least surmise, or most groundless accusation, (as the crucifying† of children, &c.) thousands were massacred in England. And, in the reign of Henry the Third, their chief synagogue in London was taken from them by the King, and given to the *Friars Peni-*

you to be carried away captive, and pray unto the Lord for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace. Jer. xxix. 7.

* See the Ceremonies of the Jews, by the Author, published by Parsons, No. 21, Paternoster Row, page 51.

† Vide Anglia Judaica, page 11, 12, 13, 116, 136, &c.

tents, on a most extraordinary complaint exhibited against them by the said *Friars*, viz. "*That they (the Friars) were not able to make the body of Christ in quiet**," for the great howlings the Jews made there during their worship †. Yet, ought they not at present, to entertain any such apprehensions, thanks be to God, the Reformation, and glorious Revolution. Besides, we live in an enlightened age, in which the investigation of theological points is accounted laudable; and so they really are, if not carried to a licentious height. Nay, had it not been for this laudable spirit of inquiry, entertained by the first Reformers, all the reformed churches would still have been sunk in

* Vide *Anglia Judaica*, page 192.

† The learned Author of *Anglia Judaica*, justly observes, that the true state of the case was, "That those locusts were situated in the Old Jewry, and having but a small dark chapel belonging to their Friary, thought the Jews fine synagogue, which stood next to it, would be more convenient for them; and therefore (after the example of their brethren of St. Anthony) begged it of the King, and furnished him with that reason for it." *Ibid.*

gross ignorance, and Romish superstition; and have groaned under the yoke of Papal tyranny: consequently, nothing can be more commendable, than a fair and candid inquiry after truth. For which reason, I am free to assert, that their fear in this case, is entirely groundless; and their reason for declining the discussion on that account, of no force,

But, as to the second reason, I think it is of great weight; and therefore, can only say, in the language of little David, "Let no man's heart fail because of him; thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine." And, although it may be said, in regard to this, (as Saul did to David) "Thou art not able to go against this Philistine; for thou art but a youth, and he a *man of war** from his youth." To this I answer, in the language of the little champion, "Thy servant slew both the lion† and the bear§: and this uncir-

* In literature. † Dr. Prideaux. See the Ceremonies of the Jews, by the Author, sold by Parsons, page 252, &c.

§ Hutchinson, &c. See *Lingua Sacra*, article מלח.

cuncised Philistine shall be as one of them. For "he cometh against me with a sword*, and with a spear†, and with a shield§; but I come in the name of the Lords of hosts‡."

But to drop the allegory, permit me, Sir, to ask you, whether you sincerely intend, in this discussion, to defend Christianity? For your doctrine is so opposite to what I always understood to be the principles of Christianity, that I must ingenuously confess, I am greatly puzzled to reconcile your principles with the attempt. What! a writer that asserts, that "*the miraculous conception of Jesus does not appear to him to be sufficiently authenticated, and that the original gospel of St Matthew did not contain it*||," set up for a defender of Christianity against the Jews! This, is such an inconsistency, as I little expected to meet with in a Philosopher, whose sole pursuit hath been in

* Elegance of diction. † Criticism. § Sophistry.
 ‡ Simple truth. || Letter IV. page 40.
 search

search of truth. Might I be so happy as to bring him acquainted with it, I should then think my pains well rewarded: at any rate, I shall endeavor to speak conformable to it. I must however acknowledge, that you are pleased to declare in plain terms, that you* *do not believe in the miraculous conception of Jesus; and that you are of opinion that he was the legitimate son of Joseph.* After such assertions as these, how you can be intitled to the appellation of a Christian, in the strict sense of the word is to me really incomprehensible. But, whether you are hearty in the cause, or no, I mean to confer, and reason freely with you on the subject, and candidly consider your arguments; but not with a view of converting either you, or any other Christian, to the Jewish faith, I assure you. No, Sir, we never attempt it; for we do not think ourselves bound (as the Christians) to propagate our religion, either by arguments, or persecution; nor

* Letter IV. page 41.

(like

(like the Mahometans) by the sword. On the contrary, we think, that conscience ought to be free; and therefore, leave every person at liberty to judge for himself; and this, I may alledge, as a third reason, in favor of those of our nation declining the discussion, as no REAL benefit is *likely* to accrue from it. For if you, and the other writers of your sect, have not been able to convince those who account themselves Orthodox Christians, of the *true unity* of God; nor they you, of the *divinity* of Christ, how shall a simple Jew, (who is perhaps despised by both) be able to convince either? This would be the highest degree of presumption, and which none of our nation are ambitious of meriting. No Sir, while we are destitute of the most *convincing*, and *persuasive* arguments in favor of Judaism, viz. six Bishopricks, Deaneries, Rectories, and Vicarages, we must not expect it. And, we are really so far from pursuing the spirit of conversion, or coveting proselytes, that
when

when any one is desirous (of his own accord) to embrace Judaism, we endeavor to deter him from his purpose, by representing to him the consequence of his design. For thus it is laid down by Maimonides*; when a person is willing to become a proselyte, and strict inquiry being made concerning him, and no (sinister) cause found, they question him thus: What is it that moves thee to become a proselyte to Judaism? Dost thou not know that Israel, at this time, is subject to *woe*, and is *hurried, expelled, and devoured* by all nations; and that *afflictions* are continually coming on them? &c. They also inform him of the punishment he becomes liable to for transgressing the commandments; as DEATH for profaning the sabbath; *excision* for eating forbidden meats, &c. Hence it is manifest, that we not only faithfully point out to him the strictness of

* Yad Hachazakah, Sepher Kedushah, Hilchoeth Eefurea Beeah; or, forbidden marriages. See also Lingua Sacra, by the author, article 77.

our law, but also an exact picture of what he is to expect in temporal matters, in thus joining himself to a nation labouring under oppression, misery, and almost universal contempt. All which, fully demonstrates, how inclinable we are towards converting any to our religion. But do not think, Sir, that this proceeds from our unwillingness, that others should be partakers of the heavenly bliss, annexed to the due performance of the Mosaic dispensation; but from a just and liberal way of thinking, and the universal CHARITY we are taught to live in with mankind in general: for it is the unanimous opinion of our Rabbins, that the LAW OF MOSES, is obligatory on those of our nation only: for as we entered into a covenant with God to keep his law, and commandments, we, consequently, are bound to the due performance thereof. But that, we hold not to be the case of the rest of mankind; for, if they do but keep the law of nature, that is the seven precepts
of

of the sons of Noah, or Noachides*, we maintain, that they thereby perform all that God requires of them, and will certainly by this service, render themselves acceptable to him. And, it is such as conform to these rules, that we call **דברים טובים**, the pious of the nations of the world; and who will be partakers of eternal life. Maimonides on Repentance, Chap. III.

Thus, Sir, you may perceive, that we do not think our religion obligatory upon ALL mankind; nor the only infallible one to salvation; as every other Religion and Sect that I have hitherto heard of, esteems itself. With these just and noble sentiments, inculcated into me from my earliest youth, it must be obvious to every impar-

These precepts are as follows: First, Not to commit idolatry. Second, Not to blaspheme. Third, To appoint and constitute just and upright judges: that justice may be maintained, and impartially administered to all. Fourth, Not to commit incest. Fifth, Not to commit murder. Sixth, Not to rob, or steal, &c. Seventh, Not to eat a member of a living creature.

D

tial

tial and liberal mind, that I do not aim at the conversion of Christians to the Jewish faith ; as I do not think such *knight errantry* incumbent upon me, or necessary to the salvation of mankind.

But as I think it proper, that I should declare what is my aim in this undertaking, I shall, without ceremony, proceed to inform you, that it is two-fold.

First, to clear our nation from the obloquy which they have laboured under for upwards of seventeen hundred years, viz. the charge of crucifying the Lord and Saviour of the world, as the orthodox Christians hold ; or a prophet that was sent to them in the first instance, as you are pleased to assert.

Second. That as you seem engaged in the laudable pursuit of truth, I would willingly assist you therein to the utmost of my power, by throwing such lights thereon, as may be a furtherance thereto. In the mean time, with my most earnest supplications

[19]

plications to the Supreme Being, that he
may be pleased to illuminate your mind in
the pursuit of truth,

I am, Sir,

Your most obedient humble servant,

DAVID LEVI.

D 2 LETTER

LETTER I.

Of the present Dispersion of the Jewish Nation.

DEAR SIR,

YOU tell us (page 12, of your letters) that “ our present dispersed and calamitous
 “ situation, is certainly a proof that we
 “ are at this very time under the divine
 “ displeasure; that we ought to examine
 “ what is the real cause of it, and make
 “ it our business to remove it.” So far we agree. But, when you observe, (page 16,) that we ought “ to consider that a
 “ captivity of seventy years only, without
 “ any peculiar hardships during the continuance of it, were deemed sufficient
 “ punishment for *all* our offences committed before that period ; whereas we
 “ have

" have experienced unspeakably greater
 " calamities, and of much longer conti-
 " nuance, since the promulgation of
 " Christianity, than the amount of all our
 " sufferings previous to it," And also,
 with great *sincerity* and *equal* affection
 observe, " that, according to appearances,
 " there is no other cause of God's anger
 " against us, besides our rejection and per-
 " secution of the prophets of our own
 " nation, Christ and the apostles, who
 " were sent to us in the first place, and
 " who confined their instructions to our
 " nation till being rejected, by us, they
 " were directed to preach to the Gentiles."

You also observe, (page 13, as I suppose
 in confirmation of the preceding quota-
 tions) " that many of the prophets of
 " God were cruelly treated, and cut off,
 " by our forefathers, as our scriptures
 " testify. But their descendants repented
 " of this, as we read in the books of Ezra
 " and Nehemiah." I must tell you sincere-
 ly, that you have attempted to mislead your
 readers

readers, under the appearance of sincerity and good will; and that, by jumbling truth and falsehood together in such a manner, as not to be easily separated by persons of ordinary capacities; and which are what the bulk of a nation generally consist of. For, first, as to our calamities being unspeakably greater, and of longer continuance since the promulgation of Christianity, than the amount of our sufferings previous to it, I grant*: and so must every candid and impartial person, who is but in the least acquainted with the history of the Jews, in this, or any other of the Christian nations, where they have sojourned; and which is one great argument with me, against Christianity being the peaceable kingdom of the Messiah, as foretold by the prophets†, in thus persecuting God's chosen and peculiar people, as you yourself allow them to be, (not to mention the blood that hath been spilt among Chris-

* Except in the time of Antiochus Epiphanus.

† Isai. xi. 6, 7, 8, &c. and Micah, iv. 3, 4, &c.

tians,

tians, in persecuting each other,) and yet, we do not bear so great a dislike to Christians, nor so great an abhorrence of their faith, as you seem to insinuate, (page 2.) although, were we like some who call themselves Christians, we might entertain such sentiments, considering the many cruel persecutions we have suffered under them; and notwithstanding that their doctrines are so contrary to the fundamental principles of our religion, yet we do not abhor them. For I do freely confess, that those doctrines do not *teach*, or *authorize* them to shed the blood of Jews. No, Sir, we carefully distinguish between the doctrine, and its professors: and, though we have suffered such cruel persecutions from Christians, yet, thanks be to God, and the reformation, we now enjoy many privileges and immunities in the several Christian states where we are settled, which our ancestors were strangers to in their dispersions. For this, we are not ungrateful; but, in return, pray for the prosperity of the state, as mentioned

tioned in my introductory letter. So much
for OUR ABHORRENCE OF THE CHRIS-
TIAN FAITH.

Second, as to the cause of our present
captivity, which you impute to our
rejecting and persecuting of the pro-
phets; that is, Christ and his apostles;
this I freely assert to be ill founded; for,
whether Christ was the second person
in the Trinity, as Christians in general
hold, or only a prophet, as you and the
rest of your sect affirm: I say, in either
case, he could not be sent to us in the *first*
place; nor could we receive him, with-
out being hostile to the laws of Moses, as
also to God, who was the author of them,
as acknowledged by both Jews and Chris-
tians. For if he came in the former cha-
racter, and the doctrine which he preached,
was intended to maintain that absurd and
corrupt tenet, it would be an unanswer-
able argument that his doctrine never came
from God; it being impossible that God
should contradict himself: for hath he not
expressly

expressly told us himself in the second commandment, THOU SHALT HAVE NO OTHER GODS BEFORE ME*. This, I think, must necessarily signify, if there be any meaning in language; ONE SUPREME INTELLIGENT BEING, endued with all possible perfection, power, wisdom, knowledge, and goodness. And, agreeably to this just, rational, and fundamental doctrine, Moses has, in the most solemn manner; endeavoured to inculcate this most important truth, in the following words: *Hear, O Israel, Jehovah our God is ONE Jehovah.* Deut. vi. 4.

These, besides numberless other passages in the Old Testament, make it plain that we could not receive Christ in the first character, without a breach of the covenant established between God and our nation. And, if in the second character, that is, as a prophet, we likewise could not receive him: for, in the first place, he was deficient in the essential character of a

* Exod. xx. 3.

prophet. For we do not find it recorded, that Christ prophesied in the name of God, as is expressed by all the other prophets from Moses to Malachi, (who was the last). As the Lord spake unto Moses, &c. and, as soon as Joshua succeeded Moses, we find immediately, *that the Lord spake unto Joshua, the son of Nun, &c.* Josh. i. 1. The same of Samuel, Isaiah, and all the rest. But as to Jesus, we only find, *that he went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel, and healing all manner of sickness, and all manner of diseases;* whether by art, deception, or supernatural power, is not my business at present to inquire: freethinkers may, perhaps, say, it was something like a spiritual mountebank; but I have only to observe, it was not like a prophet endued with the spirit of prophecy.

And the Evangelist Matthew calls the whole discourse, which takes up the fifth and sixth chapters, a sermon, not a prophecy. The same we find in Mark, i. 21. *And straightway*

straightway on the sabbath day, he entered into the synagogue and taught. Again, ver. 38. And he said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may PREACH there also. And he PREACHED in their synagogues, and cast out devils. The same in Luke. And he preached in the synagogues of Galilee. Luke iv. 44. also v. 1. and vi. 20, &c. As to John, he seems clear in the opinion of his divinity, (chap. i. 1, 2, 3, &c.) though he afterwards describes him as a teacher only, (chap. vii. 14.) Now, about the midst of the feast, Jesus went up into the temple and taught.

Nay, more, he even preached himself as *the light of the world*. Ibid. viii. 12. This, I think, is an instance not to be paralleled in scripture; for the duty of a prophet consisted, in his delivery of God's word or message to the people, whether it consisted of reproofs, a calling to repentance, or denouncing of judgment upon them for their disobedience; not in presumptuously preaching himself,

but, on the contrary, was always delivered as coming immediately from God, viz. *Thus saith the Lord**. *Then the word of the Lord came†*, &c. or, *The hand of the Lord was upon me†*. Again, we meet with the same example in John, xiv. 6. where Jesus preaches himself. From all which, it is manifest, that he was not sent by God to us as a *prophet*, seeing he was so deficient in the essential character of a prophet. As to the apostles, I think, they were less intitled to the appellation of prophets; for they only gave themselves up continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. Acts vi. 4. And Philip preached Christ. Ibid. viii. 5. The same of Saul. *And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he was the Son of God.* Ibid. ix. 20. The same of Paul, who is called an apostle of Jesus. 1 Cor. i. 1. The same in 2 Cor. i. 1. Gal. i. 1. Eph. i. 1. Col. i. 1. 1 Tim. i. 1.

* Isai. xxxvii. 6, &c. † Jer. i. 4, &c.

† Ezek. xxxvii. 1, &c.

2 Tim. i. 1. Tit. i. 1. The same of Peter. See his first epistle, i. 1. and second epistle, i. 1. See also the second and third epistles of John, where he calls himself an *elder*, &c. From all which, it is manifest, that they were not intitled to the appellation of prophets.

Secondly, if we compare Jesus with the rest of the prophets, who succeeded Moses from Joshua to Malachi, we shall find such a manifest contradiction between him and them, as fully demonstrates, that both parties could not be the messengers of God, as God never contradicts himself. For Moses says, in Deut. iv. 2. *Ye shall not ADD unto the words which I command you, neither shall ye DIMINISH ought from it, that ye may keep the COMMANDMENTS of the Lord your God, which I command you.* This, all the succeeding prophets were commanded to enforce; and which, the last of them did, in a most clear and explicit manner; at the same time closing his prophecy therewith, as intimating thereby that

that that was the ultimatum of prophecy. *Remember ye the law of Moses, my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb, for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments.* But Jesus acted in direct contradiction to the law of Moses; for whereas, the law of Moses expressly commands the adulterer and adulteress to be put to death, *And the man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress SHALL SURELY BE PUT TO DEATH.** Now, Jesus, in defiance of this express command, rescues the adulteress from the just punishment due to her crime†; and that, by one of the most extraordinary devices that ever entered into the mind of man; and which, had it been pursued by all other legislators, would speedily have led to the entire subversion and annihilation of all law and good order; for if none were

§ Malac. iv, 4. * Levit. xx. 10. † John viii. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 211, 212, 213, 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to be admitted as evidence in a court of justice against criminals, but the immaculate, villainy would soon stalk triumphant, and carry all before her with impunity; but this, thanks be to God, hath never been adopted.

Again; the law of Moses commands, that, *When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, BECAUSE HE HATH FOUND SOME UNCLEANNES IN HER, then let him write a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house.* Deut. xxvi. 6. This woman, so divorced by the law of Moses, was allowed to marry again, as well as the man, verse 3. whereas Jesus says, that, *Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth ADULTERY against her.* Mark x. 11. The same of the woman, verse 12.

And the prophet Jeremiah, at the express command of God, enforces the due observance of the sabbath; and in particular, that they bear no burden

den on the sabbath day. *Thus saith the Lord, Take heed to yourselves; and bear no BURDEN on the sabbath day.*

Jer. xvii. 21, 22. But Jesus, in direct contradiction to this command of *his Father*, by the mouth of his prophets, ordered the man who had the infirmity thirty and eight years; (and whom he cured on the sabbath) *to take up his bed and walk.*

John v. 8. Such glaring contradictions against the commandments of Moses, committed by Jesus, could by no means suffer our nation to acknowledge his divine mission; nor accept him as a prophet, when he acted so diametrically opposite to Moses, and the rest of the prophets; consequently, the charge you have brought against us, (page 17, of your letters),
 “ That there is no cause of God’s dis-
 “ pleasure against us, besides our re-
 “ jection, and persecution of the *prophets*
 “ of our own nation, Christ and the
 “ apostles,” I freely assert to be ill founded;
 for by the criterion they have here been
 tried,

tried, it is manifest, that they were not entitled to the appellation of prophets, consequently we cannot be punished for what we were not guilty of: for as they were not *prophets*; we could not, according to the justice of God; be punished for rejecting, or persecuting them; and that, for so many hundred years. Whether the generality of Christians have just reason to pay divine honors to Jesus, or not, as you observe, (page 4,) is not my business at present to enquire, but ought to be settled among Christians themselves; and that, (if I may presume to give my opinion in so weighty a cause) before you had attempted to convert the Jews to Christianity. For do but figure to yourself, dear Sir, how ridiculous it must appear, for you to invite the Jews to embrace, what you yourselves do not rightly understand. This, is such an absurdity, that I am surprized and astonished, when I reflect, how it was possible that a Divine and Philosopher, of your distinguished rank, in the republic of letters, should

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overlook

overlook it. But if I am not greatly mistaken, I verily believe, that the honor of Jesus, or the propagation of Christianity, are things of little moment in your serious thoughts, notwithstanding all your boasted sincerity. If I have erred, I beg of you to bear with me; for it is the love of truth that obliges me to speak out: and that I have just cause for entertaining this opinion, will appear clearly to every candid and impartial mind. For in your postscript, (page 54,) you argue thus: “ If, “ therefore, it be in your power to persuade a heathen, that God really spake “ to your ancestors by Moses, by the force “ of exactly similar arguments, you ought “ to acknowledge, that the same great “ Being spake by Christ and the apostles: “ and on whatever principles you reject “ the evidences of Christian miracles, any “ person will be justified in rejecting those “ on which the truth of your own religion rests.”

Here we may perceive the compleat deist,

deist, under the most Jesuitical argument; for if God spake to Moses, why not speak to Jesus? and therefore, if you will not believe that God spake to Jesus, I will not believe that he spake to Moses. Now, therefore, you must either believe *both*, or I will believe *none*. For if you say that of Jesus is false, I say that of Moses is false also. *Ergo*, both are false.

As to what you assert, (page 13,) “ But “ their descendants repented of this ;” that is, the persecutions of the prophets, “ as we read in the books of Ezra and “ Nehemiah.” And from which, I suppose, you would infer, that, as they had so solemnly repented of the persecutions of the prophets, and had “ the return of “ God’s favour in consequence of it,” our present dispersion cannot be owing to any other crime, (i. e. the persecution of the prophets) but what was subsequent to it, is of the same tenour as the other parts of your letters, viz. the blending of truth and falsehood together, in such a manner,

as not to be easily separated. That they fasted and prayed, I grant, but not for the sin of persecuting the prophets; for no such thing is to be met with in Ezra, or Nehemiah, as I shall clearly prove.

The first fast is recorded in Ezra viii. 21. and which was to seek a right way for them in safety from their enemies. *Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river Abava, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance. For I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen, to help us against the enemy in the way, &c.* The mourning, praying, and exhortation to repentance, which we have recorded in the 9th and 10th chapters of Ezra, were intirely on account of the strange women which they had taken; but there is not one word in the whole book concerning their repentance, for “persecuting, and cutting off, the prophets.” As to Nehemiah, we find in the ninth chapter, an account
of

of a fast, and repentance; and also a confession of God's goodness, &c. The former seems (as in Ezra) also in consequence of strange women; and the latter, a general confession of God's goodness to the nation, from the call of Abram, to that day; in which the slaying of the prophets is just mentioned in general terms, among all the other crimes which they had been guilty of, and which was the cause of the dreadful afflictions brought on their fathers, kings, princes, priests, and prophets, as well as themselves. All which, is a demonstration of the fallacy of what you have advanced.

I shall now attempt to point out the real cause of our present captivity; in which, will be demonstrated two propositions, viz. First, that this present captivity is a continuation of the Babylonish captivity; and secondly, that in consequence thereof, we suffer for *the sins* of our ancestors; and, " That a captivity of
 " seventy years only, without any pecu-
 " liar

“ liar hardships during the continuance
 “ of it,” (Letter II. page 16,) WAS NOT
 deemed sufficient for all our offences com-
 mitted before that time; as will be fully
 evinced, from the following prophecy,
 when clearly understood: the true know-
 ledge of which, would have prevented you
 from being so hasty in attempting to con-
 fute Rabbi Isaac therewith; or having ad-
 duced it in support of the doctrine concern-
 ing the Messiah, (Letter IV. page 36, 37,
 &c.) to which it hath not the least tendency.

The prophecy: **Seventy weeks are deter-
 mined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city,
 to finish the transgression, and to make an end
 of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity,
 and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and
 to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to
 anoint the most holy. Know therefore and
 understand, (that) from the going forth of
 the commandment, to restore and to build Je-
 rusalem, unto the anointed prince, (shall be)*

* Dan. ix. 24. &c,

seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall the anointed be cut off, and not to him: and the city and sanctuary shall be destroyed (by) the people of the prince that shall come; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and half the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations, he shall make (it) desolate, even until the consummation, (and) that (is) determined, shall be poured upon the desolate.*

This prophecy, which you, and a number of others have laid such stress on, as pointing out the precise time of the coming of the Messiah, I shall fully demonstrate, hath not the most distant reference to that event.

* This is the real sense of the Hebrew *ל' פנ*, as will be shewn in the explanation.

For the better explanation of the prophecy, it is proper that we attend a little to the context. In the preceding chapter, it is observed, that when Daniel was informed of the vision of the two thousand and three hundred days, he sought for the meaning; but not rightly comprehending it, he judged, that that great number, was a flat contradiction to the word of God, as delivered by Jeremiah, concerning the redemption at the end of seventy years*; and from thence concluded, that the captivity was prolonged, on account of the sins of the nation. This doubt arose, from a deficiency in his understanding, (of the prophecy,) and therefore, the angel said unto him, *I am now come forth to give thee skill and UNDERSTANDING.* For there is nothing else necessary to remove this doubt from your breast, but the proper understanding of the truth of the vision. And,

* Jerem. xxv. 11, 12. and xxix. 10.

as to the expression, *At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth*, that was to inform him, he was not to imagine, that on account of his prayer, God had changed his purpose, and in consequence thereof, commanded the redemption; but that as soon as he began to pray, and God saw his perplexity, in consequence of the weakness of his understanding, the royal command went forth from him, that he should come to him, to make him understand the truth of those matters that were to come to pass in future time. And as the angel Gabriel had explained to him the second vision, from whence his doubt arose, it was incumbent on him to perfect the explanation: and this is what is meant by the expression “*to shew*,” i. e. as I began the explanation; the commandment was, that I should finish it.

And the word *תַּמּוּדוּת* *Chemudoeth*, which the angel uses, does not denote *beloved*, as in the English translation, but *desire*. The

sense of which is, for as thou greatly desirest, and affectest to understand hidden things, be not therefore perplexed, but *understand the matter, and consider the vision*: and the *matter* here mentioned, is the prophecy of Jeremiah, which is above mentioned in verse the second. And the *vision*, is that which he had heard, of the *two thousand three hundred days*. He therefore, mentions each specifically, and desires him to understand them distinctly; for then all his doubts would be removed; all which was fully explained to him, in what the angel observed in the *seventy weeks*, &c. But, before I proceed to the explanation, it is proper, that I should shew in what manner the answer agreed with the intent of the question; and the reason of his making mention of *weeks*, and not years, or times, as in the other visions.

It appears clear to me, as the learned Abarbanel has observed) that Daniel, from the words of Jeremiah, perceived,
that

that God would visit all the nations, and punish them; as may be observed from the following prophecy *: *For thus saith the Lord God of Israel unto me, Take the wine cup of this fury at my hand, and cause all the nations, to whom I send thee, to drink it.* He then mentions, first, Jerusalem; afterwards the King of Egypt, the Kings of Uz, the Philistines, Edom, Moab, and the children of Ammon; the Kings of Tyre and Sidon, and all the isles beyond the sea, &c. &c. And at last, the King of Sheishak, which is Babylon.

He also farther observed, that the visitation of each nation would be at the (end) of seventy years, as Isaiah observes of Tyre; which was one of the nations. *And it shall come to pass, in that day, that Tyre shall be forgotten seventy years, Isai. xxiii. 15. The same of Babylon. And it shall come to pass, when SEVENTY YEARS are accomplished, I will punish the King of*

* Jerem. xxv. 15, &c.

Babylon. Jer. xxv. 12. And as it is also observed in the next verse, *All that is written in this book, which Jeremiab hath prophesied against* ALL THE NATIONS. From whence it is clear, that, as the visitation of Babylon was to be *seventy years*, so was that of all the other nations to be ; for so had the wisdom of God decreed to wait, according to this number. For which reason, Daniel judged, that the sins of his nation would likewise be done away by the *seventy years* of the captivity of Babylon. And therefore, the angel informed him, that this was not the case with respect to his nation ; for that their wickedness was come up before him, and their sin was very grievous ; and therefore, their sins would not be atoned for by the *seventy years*, as the rest of the nations ; to whom he allowed seventy years, to see if they would repent ; and if not, would then punish them.

But, verily, as to Israel, he would not only wait *seventy years*, but *seven times seventy*

venty years; after which, their kingdom should be cut off, and their dominion cease, and they return into captivity, to finish an atonement for their transgressions. And this is the real meaning of שבעים שבועים *Sbarungeem shivungeem*; *seventy weeks*, i. e. not *seventy years*, as you judged, but *seven times seventy years* is determined on them.

Hence the propriety of the answer to the question, is manifest, as also the expression of *weeks*, or *sevens*.

These seventy weeks are, without doubt, four hundred and ninety years; the time from the destruction of the first temple, till the destruction of the second.

This, it was the more necessary for the angel to inform him of, because Daniel judged, that after their return from Babylon, by means of that visitation, *all their sins* would be entirely done away; for which reason, the angel shewed him, that it would not be so; for that, the visitation of Babylon, was not a *perfect redemption*; because there would not be a *general collection*

collection of *all* that were in captivity, and *all the tribes*; save only a few of Judah and Benjamin, and such as fell to them, and those not of the most respectable. And, after their return, they were not free, but were under the dominion of the Persians, Medes, and Greeks; as also the Romans: and although they at one time threw off their yoke, and had kings of the Assyrians, and Herodians, yet, was there no king among them of the seed of David; neither had they the *ark*, with the *cherubim*, and the *shechinah*, or divine presence, which rested thereon; nor the *Ureem* and *Tumeeen*, nor the *spirit of prophecy*, &c. All which, is a manifestation, that it was not a perfect redemption, but only a visitation that God was pleased to visit them, in that they were allowed to build a temple to the Lord, *by the permission* of Cyrus, and according to the *measure given by him*. This was, that they might the better be enabled to work their repentance, and make an atonement for their sins; but, as that

was

was not the case, and they did evil as their fathers, their kingdom was to be cut off, and their dominion cease, after the four hundred and ninety years from the Babylonish captivity. And, this is the real meaning of the word נִכְרַח *Nechtach*; a cutting off, or separation of the people from the holy city.

He also gave him to understand, by the word נִכְרַח *Nechtach*, a separation: that, as in the second vision, which he saw of the morning and evening, and which were of the number of two thousand three hundred; he was not therefore to imagine that they were connected, so as to form a series; or be one nature, either in captivity, or repentance; or a return to their former honor; but that there should be a cutting off, or separation of seventy weeks from them. And, as this expression was very brief and obscure, he afterwards explained it more at large in the following verses, as will be shewn hereafter.

The first END proposed by the captivity,
is,

is, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make expiation for iniquity. The meaning of this is, that the sins are accounted as an impurity and filthiness; and which is the cause of their removal from their Creator; in the same manner, as it is improper to appear before kings or princes in dirty or filthy garments. And, as these filthy spots cannot be removed from off the garments, but by means of washing and scouring of them, so, in like manner, is man to act by his soul. And agreeably to this, says Solomon, *Let thy garments be always WHITE. i. e. clean.* Eccle. ix. 8. And so says the prophet, *Wash ye, make ye clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes.* Isai. i. 16. And the Psalmist says, *Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.* Psal. li. 4. And therefore, afflictions are a necessary consequence in relation to sin, for the cleansing of the soul. But, as repentance does in like manner cleanse and purify the soul from sin,

fin, God doth therefore long defer his anger from the sinner, to give him an opportunity to repent : but if he does not, he receives his punishment. Now, it is manifest that while the nation of Israel were in possession of the land of Canaan, they were exceedingly wicked and sinful before God ; particularly in idolatry, whoredom, shedding of innocent blood, and in abolishing the seventh year of rest*. For which reason, it was but just, that they should be punished for those crimes ; and therefore, when they were carried away captive to Babylon for the sin of not keeping the sabbath of the land, agreeable to what Moses foretold † ; they had also the promise of their return by Jeremiah. *For thus saith the Lord, that after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon, I will visit you, and perform my good words towards you,*

* Levit. xxv. 4.

† Then shall the land enjoy her sabbath, as long as it lieth desolate, and ye be in your enemy's land, &c. Ibid. xxvi. 34.

in causing you to return to this place, Jer. xxix. 10. Hence, it is manifest, that their visitation was to follow that of the punishment of Babylon, as mentioned in Jer. xxv. 12. And which was actually the case: for by the death of Belshazzar, and the ruin of the Babylonian empire which followed, Cyrus coming to the throne of Persia, gave leave to the Jews to return to their own land: this being the sole intent of the promise of Jeremiah. Which return was, that they might repent, in order to merit a perfect redemption. And this is the meaning of the prophet, where he says, *For I know the thoughts that I think towards you, saith the Lord, &c.* Jer. xxix. 11.

These thoughts are not meant of their visitation, or return from Babylon, but the latter redemption by the Messiah. And therefore he says, in the following verses, *Then SHALL YE call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, &c.* This is not a promise, but a command, that they should repent,

pent, and pray unto him; as the prophet further says, *And ye shall seek me, and find me, WHEN YE SHALL SEARCH FOR ME WITH ALL YOUR HEART. And I will be found of you, saith the Lord; and I will turn away your captivity, and I will gather you from ALL THE NATIONS; and from ALL THE PLACES whither I have driven you, saith the Lord.* This, it is manifest, could not denote their return from Babylon: for that was not from *all places* and *all nations*:

And that they might obtain this sovereign good, they were commanded to repent and pray to him: This, perfectly coincides with the words of Moses; that by means of their repentance, God will gather their dispersions. Levit. xxvi. 40, &c.

And, because during the time of the second temple, instead of their repenting, (as they ought to have done) they added to their former sins, by murder, whoredom, injustice, violence, and rapine; as also by

the heresies of the Sadduces, &c. It was therefore, that this captivity was determined upon them; not for the crimes which they committed during the second temple only, but for *all* they had committed from the time of their first entrance into the land, in the days of Joshua, till the destruction of the first temple, by Nebuchadnezzar; as well as those during the second temple. In the whole, near one thousand three hundred years: during the greatest part of which, they were continually doing evil in the sight of the Lord.

And as for this length of time, in which they had sinned, they were but a few years in Babylon; they consequently were not *cleansed* but of a small part of their sins; and therefore, the Supreme Being had determined, that they should go into a very long captivity, (unless they repented) to receive their punishment, and accomplish their sins, according to what the prophet Jeremiah says. *The punishment of thine iniquity is accomplished, O daughter of Zion.*

Lament.

Lament. iv. 22. For which reason, the angel made use of the same expression, *For to make an accomplishment of sins, &c.*

I must further observe, that the angel made use of three different expressions, *לְכַלֵּא וּלְהַחֲמִים וּלְכַפֵּר* *For to finish; and for to make an accomplishment; and for to make an atonement.* The reason of which is, that for the sin of not keeping the sabbatical years, they were punished by the captivity in Babylon; but, for the three great crying sins, viz. *idolatry, murder, and whoredom*, which they had been guilty of during all the time that they were in the land, they did not receive any punishment, during the Babylonish captivity, by reason of the shortness of its duration; and therefore, this long captivity was necessary *for to finish the transgression, i. e. IDOLATRY, and for to make an accomplishment for sin, i. e. WHOREDOM, and to make an atonement for iniquity, i. e. MURDER.*

Hence, the first END proposed by the captivity, is clearly explained. And, as the explanation of prophecies, is generally
very

very short, or only by indication, the angel judged it sufficient in saying, *נִקְחָהּ* is cut off; indicating thereby, that the kingdom, or government, would be *cut off*, and they *return* into captivity.

The second *END* proposed is, *לְקַבֵּל צֶדֶק וְשָׁלוֹם* and to bring in everlasting righteousness. The intent of which expression is, that, as the children of Israel were in Egypt four hundred years, in order that by their miraculous departure from thence, the truth of the existence of the blessed God, his power, and particular providence might be made manifest, as Moses was expressly instructed to say, *To the END thou mayest know THAT I AM THE LORD in the midst of the earth.* *Exod. viii. 22.* *That thou mayest KNOW that there is NONE LIKE ME in all the earth.* *Ibid. ix. 14.* Again. *And that my name MAY BE DECLARED THROUGHOUT ALL THE EARTH.* *Ibid. xiv.* This manifestation, was perfected by the children of Israel *only*, obtaining the true knowledge of God; so, in
like

like manner, was it the intent of the Supreme Being, to dignify all mankind, whom he saw plunged into the most confused and erroneous principles, not having the least sense of the truth. And, as it is not to be supposed that the intent of the Supreme Being, in the creation of man, can be frustrated, or vain, as all that he created was for his GLORY; he hath thought proper, according to his superior wisdom, *to shew mankind the way wherein they must walk, and the work that they must do; so that sins shall be consumed out of the earth, and the idols entirely cut off; and that they may all know and understand that the kingdom is the Lord's, and that he is the only Governor among the nations; and that the firm belief of his UNITY may be so unalterably fixed in their hearts, as that they may attain to the end for which they were created. This, is to be obtained by bringing his people low in this long captivity: so that when they are redeemed therefrom, and all the outcasts of Israel are gathered together;*

together; as also the *resurrection of the dead*, (and which is to follow immediately) all the nations of the earth will, by means thereof, arrive at the true belief of his divinity, and receive his kingly government. And, as this purpose is of the greatest magnitude, as ALL nations are to receive the true knowledge of God, it was consequently necessary, that this captivity should be thus long; because, the means ought to be proportioned to the effect. And, as a captivity of four hundred years in Egypt was necessary, for the nation of the Jews *only*, to arrive at the true knowledge of God, it must consequently be necessary for this captivity to be much longer, as being the means of bringing ALL the nations of the earth to the true faith, agreeably to what the prophet Isaiah says. *And it shall come to pass in THE LAST DAYS, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; AND ALL NATIONS shall flow unto it. And*
many

many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, AND HE WILL teach us OF HIS WAYS, AND WE WILL WALK IN HIS PATHS; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. Isai. ii. 2, 3. And verse 20. In that day a man shall cast away his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made, (each one) for himself to worship &c. And as he in another place observes, ALL ye inhabitants of the world, and dwellers on the earth, when he lifteth up an ensign on the mountains; and when he bloweth a trumpet, hear ye. Isai. xviii. 3. And the prophet Zephaniah says, For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may ALL call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent. Zeph. iii. 9. These, besides innumerable other passages of scripture, all testify, that by means of the restoration of the Jews, all nations will be brought to the knowledge of the true God. And in this sense it was, that the

I

angel

angel said to Daniel, *to bring in everlasting righteousness*; i. e. the captivity which is determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city, is in order to **BRING IN EVERLASTING RIGHTEOUSNESS.**

The third *and* proposed is, ~~that the vision~~ and to seal the vision and prophecy. Not according to the sense given in the English translation, *to seal up*; i. e. to cease; but quite the reverse: for whereas, before the destruction of the temple, &c. it was the place of the influence of prophecy, and which produced a number of prophets in Israel; yet, after the destruction, as the Psalmist observes, *We see not our signs; THERE IS no more any prophet*; &c. Psal. lxxix. 9. But at the restoration of Israel, the spirit of prophecy will be again restored to them; as the prophet says, *And it shall come to pass afterwards, (that) I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophecy*, &c. Joel. ii. 28. *And I will shew wonders in the heavens, and in the earth*, &c. Ibid. ii. 30. The meaning

meaning of which is, that in these days the spirit of prophecy being restored to Israel, the prophets will be enabled to work miracles, as aforesaid. This is the intent of the expression, *to seal the prophecy*; i. e. the prophecies will be then publickly authenticated; as if *sealed with the seal of God*.

He also thereby alluded to this long captivity, as the means of perfecting all the prophecies foretold, concerning the captivity of the nation; their redemption, and the resurrection of their dead; as the sole end and purpose of all the prophecies; and which being accomplished, the spirit of prophecy will again return to the nation, as heretofore.

The fourth end proposed is *to anoint the Holy of Holies*. As to the Holy of Holies, that is explained in the law*, to denote the most holy place; and, as in the second temple, the Holy of Holies was not anointed, (as the oil

* Exod. xxvi. 33. &c.

was not to be found) and which was the cause, that the Shechinah, (or divine presence) which was manifested by a visible cloud resting over the mercy seat*, was wanting in the second temple.

And the want of this, so necessary to the Holy of Holies, is allowed even by a Christian author of great note§; (who, it is to be presumed, cannot be suspected of favouring my hypothesis) who speaking of the things wanting in the second temple, observes of the anointing oil, “ But this (the oil) being wanting in
“ the second temple, the want thereof
“ caused a want of sanctity in all things
“ else belonging to it.” The angel, therefore, informs him, that at the time of their redemption, and appearance of the true Messiah, the anointing oil, which was concealed, or destroyed, at the destruction of the first temple, will be again restored to them ; and with which, they will then

* Levit. xvi. 2. &c.

§ See Prideaux's Connect. Vol. I. page 193.

anoint the Holy of Holies, as a peculiar mark of its being chosen by God; as also of its duration: and which was the reason that the second temple was not anointed; to shew, that its duration was not to be eternal, as that mentioned by Ezekiel*; and which is to be according to the pattern shewn to that prophet.

Hence it is clear, that the angel in general terms informed him, that, as in the Babylonish captivity, and also during the second temple, they would not be cleansed of their manifold sins; they were therefore, after these seventy weeks, which were determined upon them, (unless they sincerely repented) to go into captivity, to finish transgression, &c. *and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy.*

And, after the angel had thus expressed himself in general terms, he descended to particulars; and laid down four propositions, (if I may be allowed the term)

* Ezek. xliii. 10, &c.

or periods. First, *Knew therefore and understand, (that) from the going forth of the commandment, to restore and to build Jerusalem, unto the ANOINTED PRINCE, (shall be) SEVEN WEEKS.*

I have already observed*, that the vision of the seventy weeks, was in order to remove the doubt which Daniel had entertained of the prophecies of Jeremiah, concerning the visitation: the angel therefore informed him, that the case was the reverse of what he thought; and that so far from prolonging it, God would, on the contrary, hasten it; and that, at the end of seven weeks, or forty-nine years: for so long was it from the destruction of the first temple, till Cyrus†, who was THE ANOINTED PRINCE, gave leave to build the second.

Second; *And threescore and two weeks the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.* Herewith he gave him

* Page 40. † "Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus." Isai. xlv. 1.

to understand, that after the seven weeks before mentioned, there would come a time in which the building would be hindered; and which was on account of the letter written by Rehum and Shimshai to Artaxerxes; and who, in consequence thereof, made the building cease, till the second year of the reign of Darius, who gave leave to finish the building; and which, after being finished, continued till the coming of the Romans, sixty-two weeks, beside the last week, at the beginning of which, the Romans came and warred against them: and at length intirely destroyed the cities of Judah, Jerusalem, the temple, &c. For from the time that Cyrus first gave leave to build the temple, till its completion, was twenty-one years; and its duration, four hundred and twenty; in the whole sixty-three weeks, or four hundred and forty-one years: but the angel made his division at sixty-two weeks; as he afterwards described what was to come to pass in the last week. And by the word וְשָׁבוּ it shall return,

return, he alluded to the leave given by Darius, *to return to the building again*. At which time, the seventy years of the captivity of Babylon were accomplished.

And by the words, *in troublous times*, he informed him, that, during the building the temple, they would have continual trouble, and alarms from their enemies: as mentioned in Ezra. And in Nehem. iv. 16. we find, that while one half of them wrought in the work, the other half were obliged to hold *the spears, the shields, &c.* And even after the finishing of it, they would frequently be troubled, and persecuted; which was really the case; as may be observed of the troubles, and persecutions they underwent from both Greeks, and Romans: not to mention their intestine troubles. All which plainly shew, that it was not a thorough redemption.

Third, *And after threescore and two weeks shall THE ANOINTED be cut off, AND NOT TO HIM: and the city and sanctuary shall be destroyed (by) the people of the prince that shall come, &c.* *The*

*The anointed** here mentioned was King Agrippa†, who was put to death by Vespasian about

* The word *מָשִׁיחַ* denotes the anointed: and who can be properly called so, but the King. *Who was the Lord's anointed?* as David expressed himself, in regard to Saul; *For who can stretch forth his hand against the Lord's ANOINTED?* 1 Sam. xxvi. 9. And the reason that the King was so called is, because he was anointed at the express command of God, by the hand of the prophet. But this can in no wise be applied to Jesus; who, after all my researches, I cannot find, was anointed by any prophet, or other person, unless the woman pouring ointment on his head, may be so called. See Mark xiv. 3.

† As to what you observe, page 37, of a spurious Josephus, I must take the liberty to set you right, by informing you, that the work, called Josephoen Ben Gorian, was written by the true Josephus, who wrote his Josephus to the Romans, in Greek; and the other, (which you call spurious) to the Jews, in Hebrew. The cause of its not being heard of before the twelfth century, I can easily explain: for being written in Hebrew, the Christians, who before that period knew very little of the sacred language, were not able to read it; but that there were *authentic* copies of it among the Jews, is not to be doubted, as Rabbi *Tham* observes. And what is with me a great proof of its authenticity, is the contradictions of the Christian historians about it; for Basnage, who is the most considerable of them, in his great zeal to decry it, has fallen into a most egregious blunder. He first observes, "That Joseph, the historian, the son of Gorian, is one of the Doctors that France brought forth in the ELEVENTH
K " CENTURY."

about four years before the destruction of the temple: as was also his son: which is shewn by the words *לְיָמָיו* and not to him, *i. e.* there shall be no more of him: for since his death, there has been no more kingly power in the Jewish nation to this day. And why? because *the city and sanctuary shall be destroyed (by) the people of the prince that shall come: and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.* All which, was fully accomplished under Titus, who commanded them to demolish the walls, the houses, &c.

And, after having mentioned the particulars of the sixty-nine weeks, *viz.* the first seven, and the sixty-two, he proceeds

“CENTURY.” And, a little farther he observes, “That the book was known to Saadiah, one of the Excellent of the TENTH CENTURY.” [Bafnage’s History of the Jews, page 610, 611.] After such a gross mistake as this, I think very little credit ought to be given to the accounts of Christian Historians concerning this book; especially, as learned men (and you also) allow that a spurious passage has been fostered into what you are pleased to call the *true* Josephus.

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to the last week of the seventy; **וְהַגְבִּיר בְּרִית לְרַבִּים שָׁבוּעַ אֶחָד** *And he shall STRENGTHEN the covenant with many one week.* This is spoken of the prince, mentioned in the preceding verse, who coming at the beginning of the last week, was continually offering peace to the Jews, according to the emperor's desire; and therefore, the angel made use of the verb **וְהַגְבִּיר** and he shall strengthen: *i. e.* he shall endeavour to strengthen the covenant, that was between them: and for that reason, he did not say that he should *make* a covenant with them, but only strengthen the former one.

As to the expression, *And in the midst (or half) of the week (i. e. the seventieth) he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease.* The prediction was fully verified; for on account of the great troubles of the siege, the sacrifice, and the offering, ceased from the temple, three years and a half before its destruction. And he farther observes, that all this was to come

upon them, for the overspreading of the abominations, it should be made desolate: i. e. the abominations which they had committed, during both the first and second temples. Hence the answer to Daniel's doubt was complete; which was to inform him, that the visitation of the Babylonian captivity was not prolonged, but rather hastened; but that, if they should not repent and mend their ways, they would after the period allowed them, go into a long captivity, to expiate their former transgressions, &c.

This, is what appears to me; and I doubt not, to every impartial, and candid person also, when duly considered, as perfectly conformable to the whole context, beginning from the second verse of the chapter. *In the first year of his reign, I Daniel understood by books the number of years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish SEVENTY YEARS in the desolation of Jerusalem.* Hence, according to the explanation
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here given, it is manifest, that the answer was perfectly calculated to remove his doubt, which was all that was intended by it. But if you, or any other Christian, should think proper to dispute the sense here given, I mean then, to take a review of all the explanations given by the Christian commentators: and I pledge myself to produce such insurmountable objections to their different systems, as will clearly point out the fallacy of them, and firmly fix the truth of mine.

As to what you object against Rabbi Isaac, "that from the destruction of the temple, by Nebuchadnezzar, to that by Titus, was a period of more than 670 years," is, I presume, not according to scripture; but, on the contrary, is founded on the opinion embraced by Christian writers, from profane authors; who hold, that from Cyrus, King of Persia, to Darius, who was conquered by Alexander, there were fourteen Kings. But, this is directly contrary to scripture; for
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in the vision which he saw, (chap. x. xi.) the angel informed him, that there were to be three kings more in Persia, besides Cyrus ; in the third year of whose reign, he saw the vision ; which plainly shews, that there were to be but four kings in all, viz. Cyrus, his son Cambyfes, Ahafuerus, the husband of Esther, and Darius, called in scripture Artaxerxes.

I am, &c.

L E T T E R II.

*Of the divine Mission of CHRIST, compared
with that of MOSES.*

DEAR SIR,

YOU are pleased to tell us, (page 18, of your letters) • That our ancestors " rejected those who came from God," (I suppose you mean Christ and the apostles)

apostles) “ and who brought the same testimonials of a divine mission that Moses, and the preceding prophets, brought before them;” i. e. the working of miracles.

All this is easily asserted, but not proved: for, in my humble opinion, you ought to have proved; first, that the miracles which Moses wrought, were the *especial* proof of his divine mission: and, second, that those which Jesus wrought, were in like manner such, as no human being could work without the immediate assistance of God; and that there was also the same necessity for their being performed. But as you have not thought proper to proceed in this fair manner, I mean to take the task upon myself; and shall, therefore, in the first place prove, that Moses was not believed by the Jewish nation merely for the miracles which he wrought, (although there was the greatest necessity for them;) and secondly, that there was not only no such necessity for those of Jesus, but that they

they were scarcely *just* or *rational*; and consequently, cannot be offered as proofs of his divine mission, in comparison with that of Moses.

As to the miracles of Moses, there was the greatest necessity for them. For instance, the plagues he brought upon the Egyptians, were necessary for the redemption of the Jewish nation; as was the dividing of the Red Sea, and the drowning of the Egyptians, for their farther deliverance from them. The manna from heaven, and the water from the rock, were necessary for their subsistence in the wilderness; the same of all the rest.

And, although they were performed in the sight of both the Jewish and Egyptian nations, yet were they only preparatory to that, which was to fix their firm belief in the divine mission of Moses, viz. God speaking with Moses face to face, in the presence of SIX HUNDRED THOUSAND MEN, besides women and children; as mentioned in Exodus, chap. xix. 9. *And the Lord*

Lord said unto Moses, Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, AND BELIEVE THEE FOR EVER.

This, Sir, was the *especial* proof of the *divine mission* of Moses: and indeed, a greater cannot be required, as Moses himself emphatically expresses it, *For ask now of the days that are past, which were before thee, since the day that God created man upon the earth, and (ask) from one side of the heaven unto the other, whether there hath been (any such thing) as this great thing is, or hath been heard like it? Did (ever) people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of fire, as thou hast heard? Deut. iv. 32, 33.* And it is this that God meant by the expression, *And this (shall be) a sign unto thee, THAT I HAVE SENT THEE: when thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain. Exod. iii. 12.*

For this was the *essential* proof of the *divine mission* of Moses, because, they not

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only heard God speak to Moses, but to themselves also ; by which, they were fully satisfied of the *existence of the spirit of prophecy*, as we find they expressed themselves, *And we have heard his voice out of the midst of the fire : we have seen this day THAT GOD DOTH TALK WITH MAN, and he liveth.* Deut. v. 24.

And what is still a greater proof of his divine mission, and that the nation were fully convinced thereof, is, that they from thenceforward, agreed to receive, as coming from God, whatever he should deliver to them ; because, they then were fully satisfied of his mission. Hear their own words. *Now therefore why should we die ? for this great fire will consume us. If we continue to hear the voice of the Lord our God any more, then we shall die. For who (is there) of all flesh that hath heard the voice of the living God, speaking out of the midst of the fire, as we (have,) and lived ? Go thou near, and hear all that the Lord our God shall say, and speak thou unto us ALL, that the Lord*
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our God shall speak unto thee, AND WE WILL HEAR (it,) AND DO (it). Ibid. 25, '26, 27. and Exod. xv. 19.

And, as it was by such extraordinary means, that they came to entertain a firm belief in his divine mission, it hath *never* been effaced from the Jewish nation : for notwithstanding, that they fell into idolatry and other crimes, yet, at no time whatever did the nation *deny* the divine mission of Moses. No, Sir, not the destruction of our government, and the consequent dispersion of our nation ; the persecutions of Infidels and Christians, and the almost universal contempt of nations, have ever been able to root it out of our hearts.

Hence it is manifest, from the words of God himself, (and who, we must grant, was fully acquainted with the sentiments of the nation) that miracles *only* were not sufficient to establish a firm belief in the divine mission of Moses ; much less can those of Jesus, which you freely acknowledge, cannot vie with those recorded

of Moses, in point of *magnitude and splendor*, be thought so: more especially, if we consider the strong injunction laid on us by Moses, not to add or diminish from the law. *Ye shall not ADD unto the word, which I command you, neither shall ye DIMINISH (ought) from it.* Deut. iv. 2. and xii. 3. Whereas, Christians hold, that Jesus had power to abolish the Mosaical dispensation, and which they say he actually did. And although you, and some other Christians, believe the perpetual obligation of the law of Moses; yet, I suppose, that a person of your knowledge and experience need not be informed, that, that is not the sentiment of Christians in general; and this leads me to consider your attempt to convert the Jews, to what *you call Christianity*, as both preposterous, and useless. Preposterous; because you must be sensible, that to convert a nation, such as the Jews, to Christianity, the professors thereof ought to be unanimous, in what the work of salvation consists; (otherwise, they might
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be deterred therefrom, by reason of the difficulty attending the making a proper choice of that which is right;) that this is not the case with what is called Christianity, I submit to the judgment of every candid and impartial person. For, if we go to the *Catholic church*, we are told, that out of the pale thereof, there is no salvation; and consequently, must submit to believe, *transubstantiation*; the worshipping or praying to saints and images, with a whole train of *et ceteras*, or go to the devil. And, although the reformed churches, (with the whole body of dissenters) are more charitable; yet, unless a person firmly believes the doctrine of the *Trinity*, and the merits of the *blood* and sufferings of Christ, as the *Messiah* and *Saviour* of the world, there is no salvation for him. Nay, even you yourself, and those that are of your opinion, are not considered as Christians, by those that account themselves orthodox; as I understand, from both clergy and laity, with whom I have conversed. And what
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is more, you are included in the same condemnation as the Jews, for not believing in the doctrine of the Trinity; as I perceive by the following paragraph, which Mr. Lindsey, in his "Sequel to the Apology for resigning the vicarage of Catterick," observes, is taken from page 30, of an "Answer to the Rev. Mr. Romaine's Practical Commentary on the one hundred and seventh Psalm."

As I am not possessed of either the Commentary, or Answer; I shall give it in Mr. Lindsey's own words. ' In page 100, ' we meet with a surprising accusation ' against the Jews, that " they are now " without a God, because they have re- " jected the true God, the blessed Trinity " of their fathers, and worship they know " not what. They have set up some " strange kind of an infinitely extended " metaphysical Being, whom they call the " one supreme God, and who never had " any existence, but what the enemies of " Christianity have been pleased to give " him."

“ him.” Romaine’s Practical Commentary.
 ‘ This is a new description of atheism. To
 ‘ believe in ONE supreme God, is with ig-
 ‘ norant zeal asserted to be the same thing
 ‘ as to be without a God.’ But I ask, (in
 the words of Mr. Lindsey) what is *atheism*,
 or what is *blasphemy*, if denying the existence
 of ONE supreme God be not? And may not
 I say, in vindication of the Jews, against
 this malevolent charge, that if they worship
 ONE supreme God, they do worship the
 God of their fathers? Do they not wor-
 ship the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and
 of Jacob, in whom they believed? The
 God of Moses, to whom he declared him-
 self by the name I AM? The God de-
 scribed in the law and the prophets, as THE
 ONLY LIVING AND TRUE GOD. And my
 author farther observes, ‘ But the au-
 ‘ thor’s zeal cannot stop here. Christians
 ‘ are *included* in the same condemnation
 ‘ with the Jews, if they do not assent to
 ‘ this new * article of his own invented
 ‘ creed.’

* If I understand my author rightly, I must differ from
 him

' creed.' Sequel to the Apology. Page 226.

And can you imagine, that a whole nation would forsake a religion given by God himself, for such manifest contradictory opinions ; and which, according to your doctrine, are *both* far from true Christianity? Where is the poor Jew now to choose? Why he is in a worse plight than the idolatrous Jews in the time of Ahab, for they halted between two opinions only, as Elijah told them ; (1 Kings xviii. 21.) but here are *three*. Am I not now justified in calling your attempt preposterous? But perhaps you will tell me, that what you profess is right, and that "you believe
" in the perpetual obligation of ALL the
" laws which Moses prescribed to our
" nation," (page 5 of your letters.) If so, I at once pronounce your attempt to be nugatory. For can we do more by him in this ; for I always understood, that the self-existence, and equality of Christ with the Father, &c. was always held by the Trinitarians ; consequently, it cannot be a *new*-invented article,

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bracing Christianity, than adhere to the law of Moses, even according to your hypothesis? surely not.

But notwithstanding your opinion, and that of your sect, (which are but a handful) Christians in general hold, that on the preaching of the gospel, the abolishment of the Mosaical dispensation took place. And it is on this ground, that we are to consider the divine mission of Christ. Now, as the divine mission of Moses by God's speaking to him face to face, as before observed, is clearly proved; and as God had strictly enjoined us by Moses not TO ADD, or DIMINISH from the law so given by him, what must we think of one who by his doctrine abrogated it? Ephes. ii. 15. Romans vii. 6. Gal. iii. 24, 25. and Heb. x. 1. &c. In my humble opinion, I think it is clear, that he could not be sent by God, as God never contradicts himself.

As to the miracles of Jesus; I have observed, they were scarcely *just* or *rational*. I shall at present take notice of but one

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or two, viz. 1. His driving the devils out of the two men possessed, and sending them into the herd of swine. Matt. viii.

28. This, I think, was not strictly just; for, as (according to your opinion) he was but a man, and a prophet, I would willingly be informed, what right he had to destroy another person's property, in the manner he did, by sending the devils into them, and so causing them to run violently into the sea and perish?

2. His cursing the fig-tree for not bearing fruit out of season. Mark xi. 13. This I conceive to be neither rational, nor just. For, in the first place, the text says, *And when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not YET.* Hence it is manifest, that he required the tree to produce fruit out of season, and which would have been contrary to the intent of its Creator; and therefore, he, as a dutiful son, curses the innocent and guiltless tree, for doing that which his father had commanded it to do, viz. to bear fruit

fruit in its proper season. If after this, Christians should still persist in the miracle, according to the *letter* of the story, much good may it do them: but I am sure, it will never be the means of converting the unbelieving Jews to the Christian faith.

But had Jesus, on the contrary, as (St. Augustin somewhere observes) instead of cursing the fig-tree, have made a dry, dead, or withered one immediately to bud, flourish, and presently to bring forth fruit out of season, as we find recorded by Moses, who, taking a rod of each tribe, by the command of God, laid them up *in the tabernacle of witness*; in order to prove thereby, whom it was that he was pleased to make choice of for the priesthood, we find, *And it came to pass, that on the morrow, Moses went into the tabernacle of witness: and behold, the ROD of Aaron, for the house of Levi, was BUDDED, AND BROUGHT FORTH BUDS, AND BLOOMED BLOSSOMS, AND YIELDED ALMONDS.* Numb. xvii. 8. Had

Jesus acted in this manner, it would have been such an instance of his power, as to have rendered the proof of the miracle indisputable; though not of sufficient authority to prove his divine mission, as above shewn by Moses.

But, Sir, I have yet something farther to object against this miracle, and which affects the credibility of the history thereof. For in Matthew xxi. it appears, that he first cast out the buyers and sellers out of the temple; and on the morrow cursed the fig-tree; whereas, according to Mark xi. it is clear, that it was transacted before the driving of them out of the temple. Such a manifest contradiction, in inspired writers, (and who, according to your opinion, were well acquainted with the facts about which they wrote) I think, must greatly hurt the credibility of the history; which you so strenuously recommend us to peruse.

And I am confident, that there are a number of others as glaring as this; but
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which, I have not at present, either time or inclination to point out. I cannot, however, pass by the following, without taking notice of it; if it is only that Christians in general (Trinitarians, as well as Unitarians) may turn their thoughts towards it, in order to give a satisfactory answer thereto. It is as follows:

The Evangelist, St. Matthew, in the first chapter of his gospel, gives us the genealogy of Christ; and Luke, in the third chapter of his gospel, does the same; but with such difference, that an unprejudiced person, would hardly think, they belonged to one and the same person; for the latter not only differs from the former, in almost the whole genealogy from Joseph to David, but has also added a few more generations; and likewise made Jesus to descend from *Nathan*, the son of David, instead of *Solomon*.

And you will also please to observe, that they are not only contradictory to each other, but are inconsistent with themselves: for
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what can be more so than Matthew i. 18. with Matthew xiii. 55. or than Luke i. 34, 35. and Luke xiv. 22.

Perhaps you will tell me, in the language of a certain writer of your sect, who, in confuting the *Trinitarian*, *Arian*, and *Socinian* systems, concerning the miraculous conception of Jesus, observes, (in speaking to the Jews) “ All such portions
“ of the present established canon of the
“ Christian scriptures, respecting Jesus as
“ your Messiah, which *expressly* militate
“ against the description of him as fore-
“ told in your divine prophetic writings,
“ you are bound to reject as SPURIOUS.”
Call to the Jews, page 87.

Now, if Christians themselves allow that *part* of their gospels are *spurious*, how are we *sure*, that the remainder is authentic: and do you call such writings as these “ the proper or historical evidence
“ for the miracles of ‘Christ,’” and which you say (page 54 of your letters) “ is of the
“ very same kind with that of Moses?”

I defy

I defy you, or any other, to prove such gross contradictions in the history of Moses. If you cannot, (and I am confident, that it is not in your power) you must then allow the superiority of Moses's divine mission: which is all that I contend for at present.

Hence, I think, I have clearly proved, what I above proposed, viz. that miracles only are not a sufficient proof of a divine mission: that they were not the *especial proof* of that of Moses: and that there was not only no such necessity for those which Jesus wrought, but that they were barely just or rational. I shall now produce the words of Moses himself, to shew, that miracles *only*, are *not* a sufficient proof of a divine mission; for he hath told us so, in as plain and intelligent language, as it is possible for tongue to express. *If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth you A SIGN or A WONDER, and the sign or wonder COME TO PASS whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other*
gods

gods which thou hast not known, and let us serve them: thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the Lord your God. PROVETH YOU, to know whether ye love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul. Deut. xiii. 1, 2, 3.

And now, Sir, I must take the liberty to ask you, what you think of miracles, as a proof of a divine mission, after such clear and unequivocal language as, this? I am sure, if you are that sincere lover of truth that you profess to be, you must certainly abandon it as untenable.

And let me tell you, Sir, that in this admonition, you have a full answer to what you have advanced, page 20, of your letters; “ If God could permit Christ to
 “ impose upon your nation, and the world,
 “ in this manner, he might have suffered
 “ Moses to do the same, and there could
 “ be no guard against the grossest impostures.” Now, if miracles only had been a proof of a divine mission, your observation
 would

would have been just ; and I would have been as willing as any one to have allowed the force thereof ; but, on the contrary, (as I have demonstrated) miracles were *not* deemed sufficient even by God himself, as may be observed from the preceding texts. And by *this*, he expressly warns us from being imposed upon by what are called miracles ; as well knowing, that there should arise such, as would attempt to impose upon us by working pretended miracles ; and therefore strictly commands us to put that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, to death. Ibid. verse 5,

I have but one thing more at present to observe in behalf of the divine mission of Moses ; and which fully demonstrates, that it was from God, is, the prosperity (though temporal*, and which the Supreme Being

* In a Commentary that I propose to write on the Old Testament, (God willing) I mean to prove, that Moses inculcated the doctrine of a future state in his dispensation, notwithstanding what Christians have advanced to the contrary : but as that is foreign to my purpose, I shall take no farther notice of it at present.

knew was then best adapted to make an impression on them, and shew his PARTICULAR PROVIDENCE in the government of mankind) which he promises them, as the reward of their obedience ; and the dreadful calamities which he denounces against them, in case of their disobedience : all which, have been literally fulfilled to this day, by a most wonderful series of events.

Before I close this letter, I must take notice of what you call the true prophetic spirit of Christ. In page 19, you tell us, " As a true prophet, Christ foretold the " dreadful calamities that befel your nation " in that generation." And quote as a proof thereof, Luke xix. 41. But this, Sir, is no proof of his prophetic spirit: for if duly considered, you will clearly perceive, that it is neither more nor less, than the vision which the angel had shewn unto Daniel, concerning the destruction of the city and the sanctuary, as recorded in the twenty-sixth and twenty-seventh verses of the ninth chapter of Daniel; and
which,

which, at that time, was well known to all the learned Jews: and do you think that Jesus, who appears to be well acquainted with scripture, should be ignorant of it? This, I think, can by no means be supposed; but, on the contrary, it seems he was well acquainted with it, as appears from his quoting part of it. See Matt. xxiv. 15. Mark xiii. 14. Consequently, it cannot be produced, as a proof of his prophetic spirit.

But if you are desirous of a proof of his prophetic spirit, I will just mention one, and leave you to judge of it. It is as follows: *Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming in which ALL that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth, they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.* John v. 28.

Now, if this is not an imitation of the prophecy of Daniel concerning the resurrection, as recorded in chap. xii. 3. (only in a little rougher language than what he made use of) I do not know what is; but with

this distinction, that the prophet speaks of a future time: whereas Jesus speaks of it as near at hand; although a period of upwards of seventeen hundred years have elapsed since that time.

I must now take notice of another expression, recorded by John in the same chapter, verse 39. *And the Father himself which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me;* YE HAVE NEITHER HEARD HIS VOICE AT ANY TIME. Pray, Sir, what do you think of this expression; and which is so contrary to what both Jews and Christians believe; viz. That God spake to the Jewish nation face to face, as recorded by Moses. Now I think it is clear, that you must grant, either that Moses spake truth, and the expression of Christ was false; or that Christ spake truth, and Moses false; and that the whole nation were deluded in such a manner, as not to believe their own eyes, or ears. Take your choice; but I caution you to beware how you choose; for if you should prefer Christ, you will then stand on a very tottering

tottering foundation; because, Christ appeals to those very scriptures, (which, according to the rule here laid down, must then be false,) as those that testify of him.

And this leads me to consider what you have advanced, page 29. " Had Jesus
 " been an impostor, like others, by whom
 " you have been imposed upon since."
 Now the love of truth obliges me to tell you plainly, that according to your hypothesis, Jesus must be that impostor. Hear the words of a reverend and dignified clergyman of the church of England, and attentively consider the shocking alternative that he has put the character of Jesus upon. They are not my words: I am not accountable for them: Christians themselves must look to it; for it is they that give infidels cause to triumph. " Either our
 " Lord was more than a mere man, or
 " even than a mere angel: nay, either he is
 " that great I AM, which had an existence, not only before Abraham, but before the world began, and upholds all
 " things

“ things by the word of his power, or else
 “ *he must have been one of the falsest and*
 “ *vilest of the human race,* for making such
 “ groundless pretensions.” And a little
 farther, “ That, if this system* be really
 “ true, the scriptures of course must be
 “ false, and Christ and his apostles be
 “ ranked among the greatest hypocrites and
 “ impostors that ever appeared on earth.”
 See a brief and dispassionate View of
 the Difficulties attending the Trinitarian,
 Arian, and Socinian Systems, page 12, by
 Josiah Tucker, D.D. Dean of Gloucester,
 1774, price 3d.

I must now ask you once more, whether
 this is the religion, that you, with so much
 sincerity and good will, invite the Jews to
 embrace? Were it not that charity forbids
 my entertaining such a thought, I should
 be apt to pronounce the whole a farce.
 But if you are really in earnest, and wish
 to convert the Jews, to what you call
 Christianity, I think you must produce

* The Unitarian.

more substantial proofs in support of your hypothesis, than what you have yet done. And, if I might presume to offer my opinion in so weighty a cause, I think, that the fairest method, and that which is the likeliest to lead to conviction on either side, is, to take a review of all the prophecies concerning the Messiah, from Moses to Malachi; and compare them with the acts of Jesus, recorded in the New Testament; to see, whether or no they have been fulfilled in his person. This, is the method I took myself to search for truth: for I am not ashamed to tell you, that I am *a Jew* by choice; and not because I was born a Jew: far from it: for I am clearly of opinion, that every person endowed with ratiocination, ought to have a clear idea of the truth of revelation, and a true ground for his faith; as far as human wisdom can go.

And it is this, that David meant in his charge to Solomon. *And thou, Solomon, my son, KNOW the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart.* 1 Chron. xxviii. 9.

Now,

Now, it is not possible for any one to know God : But what David meant thereby was, that he should not do as the heathens did, who inherited their religion from father to son, without having any true grounds for their faith. No, says he, thou shalt not do so, but *thou shalt understand* by thy sense and reason, that, the God of thy father, is alone worthy to be served; and then, as a natural consequence, thou wilt serve him with a perfect heart. For it is manifest, that he who hath searched, and found just ground for the truth of his faith, will always serve God with a more fervent devotion, than he who receives his religion, as he does his inheritance.

If the scheme above proposed was to be pursued, I think we should soon come to a decision : for it is not the name of Messiah, but the character of the person foretold by the prophets, that is to be regarded, (as you also acknowledge, page 39) and the events to be accomplished at his coming.

If all the prophecies have been fulfilled
in

ordained to open them. If so, I beseech you to be expeditious; for salvation is a work, that I hold, cannot be perfected too soon. But I sincerely hope, that they are better founded than what you advance, (page 39) "But it is no where said that the person who is characterised by the title of *Messiah*, should be descended from David, but only that *prince* under whom you are to enjoy your temporal prosperity."

This distinction of yours, I must tell you sincerely, is truly fallacious: for no such distinction is to be met with in the *Hebrew* language: and the word *מָשִׁיחַ* in that language, denotes no more, than simply *the anointed*; and which is used to *the King*, or *High Priest*; it also denotes *to anoint*, &c. But is never used to denote the person, denominated the *Messiah*; for that has only obtained, by means of the Chaldee paraphrasts; who, in translating those words in scripture, that denoted *the prince*, under whom we are to enjoy our temporal prosperity,

perity, rendered them into Chaldee *מָלִיךְ*
the anointed; because, the said prince is every
 where described, as descending from David,
 and consequently, will be *the anointed king*
 that is to reign over the Jewish nation, af-
 ter their restoration. Hence you may clear-
 ly perceive, from what source the word
Messiah arose, and that the person so deno-
 minated, and the *prince* under whom we are
 to enjoy our prosperity, (according to your
 hypothesis) are one and the same person;
 consequently, the distinction used by you,
 is a mere fallacy.

That you may be fully convinced, of
 the truth of what I have advanced, I will
 give you an instance or two (out of the
 many that I could produce) in support of it;
 for I scorn to assert, what I cannot prove.

*And there shall come forth a rod out of the
 stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of
 his roots. Isai. xi. 1.*

The Cha.

יִפְּקֹץ מֶלֶךְ מִבְּנוֹת דָּוִד וּמִשִּׁיחָא מִבְּנֵי בְנוֹת יִרְמְיָהּ

And there shall come forth a KING from

the children of Jesse, and a MESSIAH from his childrens children shall grow. Targum, Jonathan. Ibid.

Again.

The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, &c.

Ibid. 6.

The Cha.

בְּיָמָיו דְּמַשְׁחָא דִּישְׂרָאֵל יִסְנִי שְׁלָמָא בְּאַרְעָא וְדָרָא
 דִּיכָא עִם אֲמָרָא וְנִמְרָא עִם בְּרִיא In the days of the
 MESSIAH of Israel, peace shall be great in
 the earth, and the wolf shall dwell with the
 lamb, and the leopard with the kid. Tar-
 gum, Jonathan. Ibid.

These, Sir, are clear and unequivocal passages, which both Jews and Christians apply to the Messiah: although, the latter, are rather hard drove, to make this description of the *Messiah* agree with the character of Jesus; and therefore explain it away, as denoting spiritual peace, &c. But you see that, the *Chaldee* paraphrast (of whom Christians* tell us they can make such great

* Prideaux's Connect. Vol. IV. Book VIII. page 187 and 191. Edinburgh edition.

use of, in their arguments against the Jews) is clearly against that sense; for he says, "Peace shall be great in the earth;" consequently it must be temporal.

Again. *And thou, O tower of the flock.* Micah iv. 8.

The Cha.

וְאַתָּה מְשִׁיחָא דִּישְׂרָאֵל And thou, the MESSIAH of Israel. Targum Jonathan. Ibid.

I shall produce but one more at present, which is as follows: *But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, (though) thou be little among the thousands of Judah, (yet) out of thee shall be come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel.* Micah v. 2.

The Cha.

וְאַתָּה בֵּית לָחֶם אֶפְרַתָּה כְּנֹעַר דְּוִיתָא לְאַתְמַנְחָא בְּאַלְפִיָּא דְּבֵית יְהוּדָה מִנְּךָ קִדְמִי יִפּוֹק מְשִׁיחָא לְמִדְּוֵי עֶבֶד שְׁלִטָּן עַל יִשְׂרָאֵל. And thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, as little as thou wast to be numbered among the thousands of Judah, (yet) out of thee shall come forth the MESSIAH, who is TO BEAR RULE OVER ISRAEL, Targum, Jonathan. Ibid.

This,

This, Sir, I take to be decisive against your hypothesis: because, the character of the *Messiah* or *Prince*, is so clearly depicted, that whoever runs may read: and both Jews and Christians apply it to the person called the *Messiah*. Hence it is manifest, that the person called the *Messiah* or *Christ* by the Christians; a *Prophet* by you; and a *temporal Prince* to bear rule over us, according to our (and your) opinion; is, one and the same person. Which of the three, hath the justest claim to the character, as also whether it was fulfilled in either of the two first characters, is another point to be discussed, which at present is foreign to the purpose. I could produce more examples in support of what I have advanced, but these I think, are sufficient to convince a philosopher of such candid and liberal sentiments, as you are known to possess, in so eminent a degree. I therefore, have no doubt, but that you will either retract what you have advanced on this point, or support it by substantial proofs; either of which,

which, I shall be happy to see, With the
highest sentiments of sincerity and respect,
I remain,

SIR,

Your's, &c.

D. L E V I,

ERRATUM. In page 47, line 16, after *or be*, add *of*.

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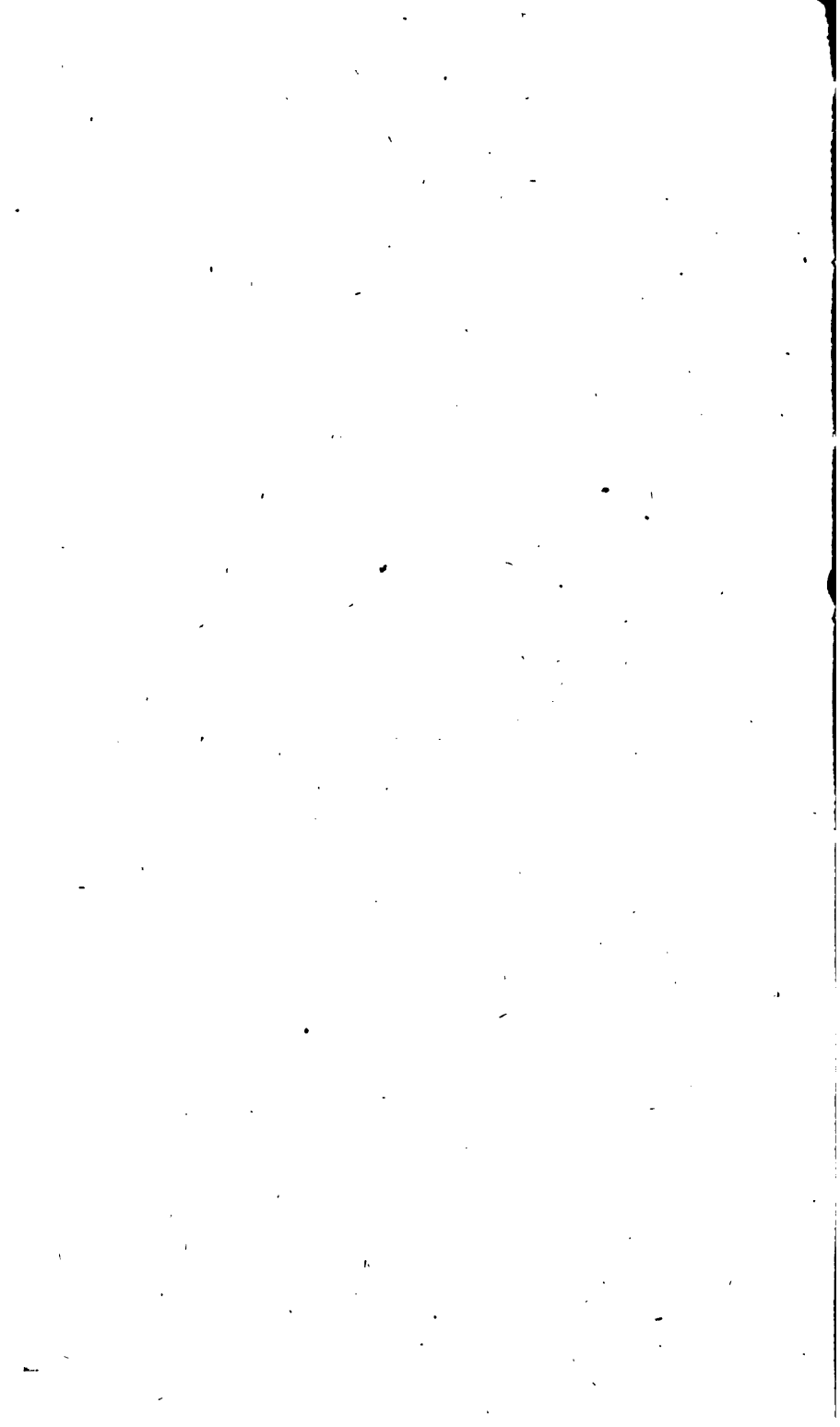
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P A R T II.

L E T T E R I.

Of Mr. Levi's Want of Candour, his Ignorance of profane Literature, and of the New Testament ; and of his requiring Unanimity in the Opinions of Christians.

Brethren in the belief of the unity of God,

I Am happy to find that I have, in any measure, gained your attention to the *Letters* I took the liberty to address to you, inviting you to an amicable discussion of the evidences of christianity, and that one of your body, Mr. David Levi, has favoured me with an answer to them. I should have

PART II.

B

been

been more happy if he had been better acquainted with profane literature, as it is commonly, though improperly called, and if he had shewn a little more candour.

According to him, p. 9, I am "not intitled to the appellation of a christian," and p. 30, "notwithstanding all my boasted sincerity, the honour of God, or the propagation of christianity, are things of little moment in my serious thoughts." He perceives in me, p. 31, "a complete deist," "under a most jesuitical argument."

I feel not for myself, but for *you*, when I recite these things. You must be ashamed that one of your body should have begun this important discussion in a manner so unworthy of you. To make any reply to such calumny would answer no purpose. If it be well founded, I must be so utterly unprincipled, that my most solemn declarations would stand for nothing. That I am not the person Mr. Levi describes, I can only appeal to the tenor of my conduct, and to my writings, with both which he is probably unacquainted.

I com-

I complain of my opponent's want of profane literature, because it leaves us destitute of some common principles, without which it is impossible to come to any conclusion with respect to the question in debate. He maintains, p. 65, that it is contrary to the scriptures to assert that there were more than four kings of Persia; whereas, if there be any faith in history, there were more than twice that number. Nor is this at all contrary to the scriptures. For it is only said, Dan. xi. 2. *Behold there shall stand up yet three kings in Persia, and the fourth shall be far richer than they all; and by his strength, through his riches, he shall stir up all against the realm of Grecia.* By this nothing more is to be understood, than that only three kings of Persia would intervene between the time of Daniel, and that king who would make a formidable invasion of Greece.

Mr. Levi also asserts (Note, p. 61) that the work of Josippon Ben Gorion in Hebrew, was written by the same Josephus who wrote in Greek: whereas no two histo-

ries can be more contradictory to one another than they are, even with respect to the very circumstance for which he quotes the Hebrew work, viz. the history of king Agrippa, who according to *it* was put to death by Vespasian, at the siege of Jerusalem, but according to the Greek lived peaceably at Rome, after the Jewish war was over. The Hebrew Josephus makes this Agrippa to have been the messiah of Daniel (Gothæ edit. p. 828) whereas the writer of the Greek applied all the prophecies concerning your messiah to Vespasian.

Any person possessed of the two histories, as I am, may easily satisfy himself that the Greek is the genuine work, and the Hebrew copy the production of another person, and entitled to no credit whatever. For the evidence of this I must refer you to Mr. Basnage *.

* Mr. Levi says (p. 61, Note) that Mr. Basnage, "in his great zeal to decry this work has fallen into a most egregious blunder;" observing that he first says that it was the production of the *eleventh* century, and then that it was known to Saadias in the *tenth* century. But this is a misre-

It is necessary also to the proper discussion of the evidences of christianity, that the Jews should be well acquainted with the New Testament, which Mr. Levi is not. He even says, p 22, he “ does not find it “ recorded that Jesus prophesied *in the* “ *name of God,*” and asserts, p. 23, that “ he preached *himself* as the light of the “ world ;” whereas nothing can be more evident than that Jesus uniformly asserted his mission from God, and appealed to the miracles which God enabled him to perform ; disclaiming all wisdom and power of his own, 1 John v. 19. *Verily, verily, I*

a misrepresentation of Mr. Basnage, who, after giving his opinion concerning the real age of this work, viz. that it was the production of the eleventh century, says it did not make its appearance before the *twelfth*, and that the most that can be said is, that it may *seem* to be referred to by two writers in the *tenth* century, but that “ those two testimonies are very obscure and doubtful.” Liv. 9. chap. 6. vol. 13. p. 159. of the last edition. Could a work of this kind have remained unknown, and unquoted by any writer, Jew or christian, a thousand years, when so much account has been made of it since ? It is absolutely incredible. Dr. Lardner supposes this work to have been written in the beginning of the tenth century. *Testimonies*, vol. 1. p. 213.

say unto you, the Son can do nothing of himself. ver. 30, I can of my ownself do nothing. ver. 36, The works which the Father has given me to finish, the same works that I do bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me; and the Father himself, who hath sent me, hath borne witness of me, ver. 43, I come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not. This, and more to the same purpose, is all contained in one single chapter. He likewise says (John xiv. 10) The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself, but the Father that dwelleth in me he doth the works. Such is the uniform language of Jesus, who, Mr. Levi says, did not speak in the name of God,

Mr. Levi says, p. 72, that “ the professors of christianity ought to be unanimous before they attempt to convert the “ Jews,” and particularly that we ought first to be agreed among ourselves whether Jesus be God. Besides what I have advanced on this subject in my former *Letters*, 2d edition, p. 42, I shall now observe, that it is as much your business to determine what the tenets of christianity are, as it is
ours.

ours. You see a person pretending to come to you from the God of your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and to do such things as no man could do but by the immediate power of God. Is it not then your business to inquire whether he really comes from God, or not? If your ancestors had given no attention to a claim of this kind, they would have rejected even Moses.

Do you, then, consider what Jesus *taught*, and what he *did*, and judge for yourselves, whether what he delivered was worthy of God, and whether the miracles were performed by *the finger of God*, or not. If we who profess christianity should all agree what its tenets are, it would not, it ought not to satisfy you. We might make too favourable a report concerning it, and such as you would not abide by. Why then do you wait for our agreement, when, if we did agree, that circumstance would not weigh with you at all?

L E T T E R II.

Of the miraculous Conception of Jesus, and of Contradictions in the Gospel History.

MR. Levi says, p. 9, I cannot be a christian, because I do not believe the miraculous conception of Jesus. But I imagine it is sufficient to denominate a person a christian, that he believes the divine mission of Jesus, whether he believe any thing else concerning him, or not.

He says that, in order to disbelieve this, I must suppose some parts of our present gospels to be spurious; and then, he says, p. 82, "how are we sure that the remainder is authentic?" I cannot here repeat all that I have written on this subject in the fourth volume of my *History of Early Opinions concerning Christ*, but must content myself with referring you to that work. I shall only observe on this occasion, that I consider the evangelists as mere *historians* (indeed,

(indeed, they do not pretend to any thing more) faithful relaters of what they believed to be true. But no histories are received on the mere faith of the writers, but properly on the testimony of the age in which they wrote, which would not have received their accounts, and have handed them down to posterity as *true*, if they had not been known to be so, at least in the main.

Now the great and leading facts in the gospel history, the account of the doctrines, the miracles, the death, and resurrection of Christ, are so handed down to us. They were believed by christians in all ages, and from the earliest times. But this is not the case with the account of the miraculous conception. The christians of your nation (I believe the great body of them, though with some exceptions) never did believe it; and a very learned and highly respected person among the Jewish christians, I mean Symmachus, who translated the Hebrew scriptures into Greek, wrote a treatise, in a very early period, to refute the story. It was
also

also disbelieved by all the early Gnostics, with whose opinions it would have accorded remarkably well.

The miraculous conception, therefore, cannot be said to have the testimony of the age in which it was promulgated; and as the Jews, being natives of the country, had the best opportunity of informing themselves concerning it, their testimony, which is against it, is entitled to the greatest credit.

The *gospel* used by your countrymen was that of Matthew, without the two first chapters, which contain the account of the miraculous conception. It may be presumed, therefore, that they saw sufficient reason for rejecting those chapters, as, in their opinion, not written by Matthew; and if so extraordinary a story had been true, it cannot be imagined that either he, or Mark, or John, would have omitted it. As to the account of Luke, whether it was written by him or not, I have shewn that it abounds with the most manifest improbabilities.

As to the disbelief of the miraculous conception drawing after it the disbelief of the whole

whole gospel history, judge from fact, and not from imagination. Was this the case with the Ebionites? and, among them, of Symmachus? To say nothing of myself, can it be shewn to have been the case with any other person who has thought as I do with respect to this subject? The greater probability is, that persons finding themselves unable to believe this story, and not seeing how to separate the belief of it from that of the rest of the history, may be led to reject the whole. This, indeed, is, in some measure, your own case.

Mr. Levi's view in urging me with this story, is sufficiently conspicuous. If I should admit the truth of it, he would immediately say, as all your countrymen have done; that there was an end of the argument between us; because Jesus, not being descended in the usual course of generation from the male line of David, could not be your Messiah. On the other hand, if the story be rejected, he will reject the whole gospel history, of which, he says, it is a part.

That

That the story of the miraculous conception should be started, and gain credit, in a very early period, I do not much wonder at, considering, how willing the Christians were to think as highly as possible of their master, with the meanness of whose birth and parentage, as well as the circumstances of his death, they were continually reproached.

One of the contradictions that Mr. Levi observes in the gospel history, p. 81, is that, according to Matthew, Jesus was descended from Nathan, but according to Luke from Solomon. As I reject the introduction to the gospel of Matthew, as not written by him, I am not concerned with this contradiction. There is another, however, on which he lays much stress, p. 80; which is that according to Mark, Jesus cursed the fig-tree the day after his arrival at Jerusalem, whereas, according to Matthew, it was on the day of his arrival.

But would Mr. Levi, or any reasonable man, reject, as of no value, any other two
histo-

historians, for so trifling a variation as this? If we do, we must reject all history, and even the books of Kings and Chronicles. For in them there are greater differences than this. On the contrary, the surest marks of authenticity in histories, the circumstances that intitle them to the fullest credit, are their agreement in things of great consequence, to which the writers could not but attend, and their differing in things of small consequence, to which they would naturally give less attention. This shews that they did not write in concert, but that they are proper *independent evidences* of the facts they relate. Had one of the evangelists said that Jesus drove the buyers and sellers out of the temple, and another of them asserted that he did no such thing, it would have been more to Mr. Levi's purpose. But even such a difference as this would not invalidate the whole of the gospel history.

L E T T E R

L E T T E R III.

Of the Miracles of Jesus as a Proof of his divine Mission, and of Mr. Levi's Objections to some of them.

WHAT surprizes me most in Mr. Levi is his professing to pay so little regard to the *miracles* of Jesus. "Whether," he says, p. 22, "it was by the art of deception, or supernatural power, it is not my business to inquire." But, certainly, nothing can be of more importance than to inquire whether miracles are real or pretended. Because a change in the constitution of nature can only be made by the author of nature, or with his permission; and if one real miracle might be permitted for the purpose of deception, any other, or all of them, might.

If the divine Being could either by his own immediate power, or the agency of any superior

superior spirit, enable Jesus to heal the sick, to feed the multitudes, to change water into wine, to still a tempest, to walk on the sea, and to raise the dead; and if, after a public execution (which rendered his death unquestionable) God should raise him from the dead, and take him up into heaven (by belief of which thousands and ten thousands, millions and thousands of millions, were deceived) he might have permitted all the miracles recorded in the books of Moses, and for the same purpose of deception. As, therefore, you justly, and with indignation, reject the latter supposition, you ought also to reject the former. And if the miracles recorded in the New Testament be true, the Christian doctrine is of God. It behoves you, therefore, seriously to inquire whether they be true or not.

Mr. Levi says, p. 71, that “ miracles
 “ only were not sufficient to establish a firm
 “ belief in the divine mission of Moses.”
 But, after considering what he urges on the
 subject, I cannot find any thing more than
 miracles to have been necessary. Indeed
there

there cannot be any other criterion of divine interposition besides miracles. He says, p. 68, "it was God speaking with Moses face to face, in the presence of six hundred thousand men, besides women and children." But what was this besides a miracle? If there had been nothing extraordinary in the transaction, nothing more than what might have happened to any other man, would your ancestors have believed in him?

Let us consider what Moses himself says, in the very passage quoted by Mr. Levi, Exod. xix. 9. *And the Lord said unto Moses, Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee for ever*; referring, no doubt, to the delivery of the ten commandments in the hearing of all the people, in a distinct articulate voice, from mount Sinai. This was, indeed, a most extraordinary miracle, and justly confirmed the faith of your ancestors in Moses, so that it has never been shaken since. But it was simply *a miracle* that did it. When Moses, in his first conference

ference with God, at the burning-bush, naturally asked, how he should make it appear to his countrymen that God had sent him, he was directed to the changing of his rod into a serpent before them. Nothing but a miracle, of some kind or other, could have convinced them that he came from God. But any real miracle would have been sufficient for the purpose.

Mr. Levi says, p. 83, that "Moses himself has told us, in the most plain and intelligible language, that miracles only are not a sufficient proof of a divine mission;" and for this purpose he quotes Deut. xiii. 1, 2, 3. *If there arise among you a prophet, a dreamer of dreams, and he give you a sign, or a wonder; and the sign or wonder come to pass whereof he speaketh unto thee, saying, let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; thou shalt not hearken to the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams. For the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul.*

PART II.

C

This

This was probably to forewarn your ancestors, that persons might come to them with such tricks as the Egyptian magicians exhibited (the fallacy of which they might not be able to detect) and might endeavour to persuade them to worship other gods; but that they were not to listen to such pretended miracles. They knew that real, numerous, and unquestionable miracles had been wrought in proof of their religion, and therefore that there *could* be no other real miracles to overthrow it. Or, which is no uncommon thing, Moses might put a case that he knew to be impossible, in order to express himself in a stronger manner. Thus Paul says to a christian church, "if himself, "or an angel from heaven, should preach "any other doctrine than that which he had "taught them, they were not to regard "him." Gal. i. 8. But he had no idea of the possibility of any such thing.

But you will please to observe, that what Moses says does not at all apply to the case of Jesus. For he did not endeavour to draw you to the worship of *other gods*. He was
a humble

a humble and devout worshipper of the same God that you worship, and he worshipped him in the same manner. There is, therefore, no reason whatever why you should not attend to the miracles of Jesus, as much as to those of Moses, or those of any of the prophets who followed him.

Mr. Levi objects to the miracles of Jesus, p. 77, as “scarcely just, or rational.” But if they were *true*, we should be cautious how we pronounce this censure upon them. In general, it cannot be denied that the miracles of Jesus were both benevolent and great, such as were worthy of a messenger from the greatest and best of Beings. With respect to one or two of them, a person so disposed may cavil, as he might at some that are recorded in the Old Testament. That which Mr. Levi objects to as *unjust* in our Saviour, is the destruction of the swine, after the cure of the two fierce demoniacs. “What right had he,” says Mr. Levi, p. 78, “to destroy another man’s property.” I answer, he assumed no right in the case. The miracle was not wrought by him, but by God,

whose right to take our property, our lives, or whatever he has given, no man can question. Jesus laid no hand on the swine, and without a miracle, or the immediate act of God, such a number of swine could never have been made to run into the sea.

When Mr. Levi says the miracles of Jesus were not *rational*, he refers to his cursing the barren fig-tree. "He requires," he says, p. 78, "the tree to produce fruit out of 'season.'" But the *time of figs* does not necessarily mean the time of the *growing*, or *ripening*, of figs, but rather that of *gathering* them; so that when Jesus saw the tree with leaves, or in a healthy state, he might naturally expect to find fruit also. But this miracle had less respect to the fig-tree, than to serve as a warning to your ancestors, to bring forth the fruits that God expected of them; intimating, in a very expressive manner, that if they did not, they would perish like that tree.

Arguing against the pretensions of Jesus to the gift of *prophecy*, Mr. Levi says, p. 87, "the destruction of Jerusalem was known

" to

“to all the learned Jews, and therefore Jesus “could not be ignorant of it.” Consequently, it could not require the spirit of prophecy to foretel all that he did concerning it.

But how does it appear that this great and calamitous event *was* known to all the learned Jews of that age? Nothing is more evident, from the history of it, than that they were far indeed from expecting any such thing in the time of Jesus, or long afterwards. On the contrary, during the very siege, they were continually flattering themselves with the hope of the appearance of the Messiah, to deliver them. Besides, the prophecy of Daniel is only general, and that of Jesus very particular, describing the circumstances of the siege, and limiting the time of it. He also mentions the fate of the *temple*, concerning which Daniel says nothing at all. The taking of the city did not imply the demolition of the temple. This the conquerors might be expected to preserve with care, as Titus actually endea-

voured to do. And least of all could it have been supposed that the Jews themselves would have promoted the destruction of it.

L E T T E R IV.

*Of the supposed Contradictions between Jesus
and Moses.*

MR. Levi makes use of another argument, which, if it could be supported, would indeed prove that Jesus was a false prophet. "If," says he, p. 25, "we compare Jesus with the rest of the prophets, we shall find such a manifest contradiction between him and them, as to demonstrate that both parties could not be messengers of God, as God never contradicts himself." This he argues on two suppositions, one on that of Christ being God, and the other on his being only a prophet.

"Whether

“ Whether Christ,” p. 21, “ was the
 “ second person in the trinity, as Christians
 “ in general hold, or only a prophet, as you
 “ and the rest of your sect affirm; I say, in
 “ either case, he could not be sent to us in
 “ the first place, nor could we receive him,
 “ without being hostile to the laws of Moses,
 “ as also to God who was the author of
 “ them, as acknowledged both by Jews and
 “ Christians. For if he came in the former
 “ character, and the doctrine which he
 “ preached was intended to maintain that
 “ absurd and corrupt tenet, it would be an
 “ unanswerable argument that his doctrine
 “ never came from God, it being impossible
 “ that God should contradict himself. For
 “ has he not expressly told us himself, in
 “ the first commandment, THOU SHALT
 “ HAVE NO OTHER GODS BEFORE ME?
 “ This, I think, must necessarily signify, if
 “ there be any meaning in language, ONE
 “ SUPREME INTELLIGENT BEING, endued
 “ with all possible perfection, power, wisdom,
 “ and goodness. And, agreeable to this just,
 “ rational,

“ rational, and fundamental doctrine, Moses
 “ has, in the most solemn manner, endea-
 “ voured to inculcate this most important
 “ truth, in the following words, *Hear, O*
 “ *Israel, Jehovah our God is one Jehovah.*
 “ Deut. vi. 4. These, besides numberless
 “ other passages in the Old Testament, make
 “ it plain that we could not receive Christ
 “ in the first character, without a breach of
 “ the covenant established between God
 “ and our nation.”

In this all unitarian christians, and your
 whole nation, are agreed. But Mr. Levi
 does not pretend to shew that either Jesus
 himself, or his apostles, taught any such
 doctrine as that of the *trinity*; and your
 writers in general prove, against the Chris-
 tians, that the New Testament contains no
 such thing. Mr. Levi, therefore, ought
 not to have left the argument in this state;
 but have acknowledged, as others of your
 countrymen have done, that the doctrine of
 the trinity is not any doctrine of the New
 Testament, but a gross corruption of Chris-
 tianity. Moses himself is not more explicit
 in

in teaching the unity of God than are Christ and his apostles, as I have shewn in my former letters; and this Mr. Levi has not controverted.

I shall now consider what Mr. Levi has alleged to prove that Jesus cannot be received as a true prophet of God, on account of his having contradicted what had been advanced by preceding prophets, and especially by Moses, the greatest of them. He quotes for this purpose, Deut. iv. 2. and xii. 3.

“Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, whereas Christians hold that Jesus had power to abolish the Mosaical dispensation, and which, say they, he actually did. And although you, and some other Christians, believe the perpetual obligation of the law of Moses, yet I suppose that a person of your knowledge need not be informed, that it is not the sentiment of Christians in general.”

But has Mr. Levi proved from the New Testament, that Christ *did* annul the law of Moses? What some Christians have thought on

on this subject is no more to the purpose, than their believing the doctrine of the trinity. I have shewn in my former letters, that Christ and the apostles, asserted the perpetual obligation of the law of Moses; and Mr. Levi has not attempted to prove that I have misrepresented their meaning. Nay, your own writers have argued this before me, against the generality of Christians, who had asserted that the law of Moses was abolished by the gospel. You may see my thoughts on this subject at large in the *Theological Repository*, under the signature of HERMAS, Vol. v. p. 403. But this is no part of the argument between you and me, but, like that concerning the doctrine of the trinity, between me and other Christians.

I am satisfied, however, that Mr. Levi has mistaken the sense of Moses in the passage he quotes. It is not there said, or intimated, that God would never, *by any future prophet*, make any change in what he had enjoined by Moses. He only warns them, that is, the people in general, who had no particular

And yet for the hardness of your hearts, or because the woman who should be disliked would be subject to cruel treatment, divorces were permitted. But could not the same power which gave the permission, revoke it at his pleasure ?

I have no occasion to reply on the same principle to any other of Mr. Levi's charges of contradiction, because they arose among yourselves, and were such additions to the institutions of Moses, as are most expressly forbidden in the passage quoted above.

Mr. Levi urges the command of Jeremiah, xvii. 21. *Take heed to yourselves, that ye bear no burden on the sabbath-day ; whereas Jesus commanded some of the sick persons, whom he healed on that day, to take up their beds, and carry them home ; probably to shew that they were perfectly, though suddenly, restored to their vigour. But the meaning of Jeremiah was to forbid habitual labour on the sabbath-day, which it appears that the people then made use of ; carrying burdens out of their houses, and through the gates of the city,*

as on other days ; whereas all that Jesus did was to correct a superstitious punctilio in the observance of it. The man who carried his bed to his own house, was not labouring to earn his livelihood. Besides, in that age at least, your own people allowed more labour than Jesus here authorized, as to lead their cattle to water, and relieve them if they fell into pits, &c. though it might require great labour ; and they defended themselves when they were attacked on the sabbath-day. But if what Jesus ordered *had* been a change in the law, surely he who could heal the sick by a word speaking, shewed that he was authorized to do it.

Mr. Levi also charges it as a contradiction to Moses, p. 26, that Jesus did not pronounce sentence of death on the woman taken in adultery. But in bringing this woman to Jesus, your ancestors only meant to ensnare him. If he had passed sentence of death on her (which it was no more *his* business, than it was of those who brought her to him) they would very justly have accused him to the Roman governor, as one who
had

had assumed temporal power. Besides, Jesus did not say that the woman *ought* not to have been stoned; but, acting in his proper character, as a *prophet*, he bid her *go away, and sin no more.*

The last instance that I shall mention is one with respect to which Mr. Levi is still more evidently mistaken. "He said, John v. 39, *The Father himself who hath sent me hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time,*" Mr. Levi should have added, *nor seen his shape,* and then he could not have made the remark which follows. "Pray Sir," p. 88, "What do you think of this expression, which is so contrary to what both Jews and christians believe, viz. that God spake to the Jewish nation face to face, as recorded by Moses." But what Jesus said related to the very persons whom he was addressing, none of whom had heard God speak from mount Sinai, and certainly had not seen any *form*, or *shape*, there, as Moses himself repeatedly declared. But, perhaps, Jesus spake interrogatively, *Have ye not heard*

heard his voice, and seen his shape? alluding to the voice from heaven, and the descent of the Holy Spirit like a dove, which some of his auditors might have heard and seen.

Such are the contradictions which Mr. Levi has charged on the founder of the christian religion. Do you now judge whether they will authorize you to pronounce him to be a false prophet.

L E T T E R V.

Of the Sufferings of the Jewish Nation.

AS an argument of your nation having offended God beyond any thing that is recorded in the books of the Old Testament, I requested you to attend to the extreme severity of your present sufferings, and the long continuance of your banishment from your own country; and I said that a captivity of seventy years was deemed a sufficient punishment for all your transgressions preceding that event.

Mr.

Mr. Levi replies, that the Babylonish captivity was not a punishment for *all* the sins of the preceding period. "They were carried away to Babylon," he says, p. 45, "for the sin of not keeping the sabbath of the land, agreeable to what Moses foretold. But for their other sins, viz. *idolatry, murder, and whoredom*, they did not receive any punishment during the Babylonish captivity," p. 49, "by reason of the shortness of its duration, and therefore this longer captivity was necessary to finish *transgression*, that is, *idolatry*, and to make an accomplishment for *sin*, i. e. *whoredom*, and to make an atonement for *iniquity*, i. e. *murder*."

Thus does Mr. Levi interpret Daniel's famous prophecy of *seventy weeks*, of which he gives the following account, p. 40.——

"Daniel, judging that the sins of his nation would be done away by the seventy years captivity at Babylon, the angel informs him, that their sin would not be atoned for by the seventy years. But verily, as to Israel, he would not only
PART II. D "wait

“ wait seventy years, but seven times seventy
 “ years ; after which their kingdom should
 “ be cut off, and their dominion cease, and
 “ they return into captivity, to finish an
 “ atonement for their transgressions.”

But the language of the prophecy clearly indicates that the termination of this longer period of seven times seventy years would be some joyful event, and not a calamitous one. For it was “ to finish transgression, to make
 “ an end of sin, to make reconciliation for
 “ iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to *seal up* the vision” (which Mr. Levi renders, p. 55, by *publicly authenticating* it) “ and to anoint the most holy.”
 Could this be *the beginning of sorrows* ?

If by the *most holy*, we understand the holy prophet, or prince, whom we suppose to be mentioned afterwards, under the character of *Messiah the prince*, these four hundred and ninety years will terminate at the time of his being appointed to his office. This I think we are authorized to infer from the manner in which the angel immediately proceeds to explain himself. *Know therefore*

fore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem unto Messiah the prince, shall be seven weeks and sixty and two weeks; that is, sixty-nine weeks. One week still remains to make up the seventy; but of this the angel gives an account at the close of the prophecy. It was that week in the midst of which the sacrifice and oblation was to cease, which was to be the beginning of farther calamities. But he does not say that these farther calamities would be a punishment inflicted for sins committed before the Babylonish captivity.

Mr. Levi says, p. 43, that the word נחתך, which we render *determined*, means *cut off*. But admitting this, it is far from following that this was to be a cutting off, or a separation, of the *people* from the holy city. For it was the *period of time* that was cut off, and not the *people*. It is therefore far more natural to suppose, that it means *cutting off*, *marking*, or *determining* a period of time, as in our translation.

I would farther observe, that Mr. Levi's account of your present sufferings is neither agreeable to *reason*, nor to the *scriptures*. It is no where said, either before the captivity, or afterwards, that it was intended as a punishment for not observing the *sabbath* in particular, but for *sin* in general. It is only said that, during that captivity, the land would keep its sabbaths, which it had not been allowed to do before. 2 Chron. xxxvi. 21. *To fulfil the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths. For as long as she lay desolate, she kept sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years.* But this is far from amounting to a proof that this captivity was for no other purpose.

If we consider the conduct of your ancestors after their return from Babylon, we shall perceive no appearance of their supposing that they had been punished there for their neglect of the sabbath only, while greater crimes remained to be expiated by heavier judgments at a distant period. The
con-

confession they make is of sin in general, and not of neglecting the sabbath in particular. Nay, the neglect of the sabbath is not mentioned at all. Neh. ix. 23. *Thou art just in all that thou hast brought upon us. For thou hast done right, and we have done wickedly. Neither have our kings, our princes, our priests, or our fathers, kept thy law, nor hearkened unto thy commandments, and thy testimonies, wherewith thou didst testify against them. For they have not served thee in their kingdom, and in that great goodness which thou gavest them, and in that large and fat land which thou gavest before them; neither turned they from their wicked works.* Here is no mention of the non-observance of the sabbath in particular; which might have been expected, if it had been understood by the people that *that* had been the offence for which *only* they had suffered,

Besides, in how capricious and unworthy a manner does Mr. Levi represent the God of your fathers, the righteous judge of all the earth, as acting; in punishing for one particular sin by a heavy calamity, and

after shewing all the marks of forgiveness and reconciliation, reserving his greatest vengeance for another season, not to commence till six hundred years afterwards. How contrary is this to his own most solemn declaration by Moses (Exod. xx. 5.) that he would visit the sins of the fathers upon the children *to the third and fourth generation* only, of them that hate him.

On the plan of Mr. Levi, even your next restoration to your country will be no proof that God has forgiven your nation *all* the sins they committed before the Babylonish captivity, to say nothing of those committed since. According to him, you may now be suffering for their *idolatry*, while another dispersion may be appointed for their *murders*, and another for their *whoredoms*, in all of which you who suffer had no concern, &c. The very mention of the idea is sufficient to explode it.

Mr. Levi, as if not quite satisfied with this account of your present sufferings, assigns another reason for them, viz. that, besides answering the purpose of *punishment*, they
likewise

likewise answer that of *instruction*, not to yourselves, but the rest of the world. “As
 “a captivity of four hundred years,” he
 says, p. 52, “was necessary for the nation
 “of the Jews only to arrive at the true
 “knowledge of God, it must consequently
 “be necessary for this captivity to be much
 “longer, as being the means of bringing all
 “the nations of the earth to the true faith,
 “agreeable to what the prophet Isaiah says,
 “*And it shall come to pass in the last days,*
 “*that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall*
 “*be established on the top of the mountains,*
 “*and be exalted above the hills, and all nations*
 “*shall flow unto it.*”

On this I must observe, that neither is it
 any where said that the design of the bond-
 age in Egypt was to teach the Israelites the
 knowledge of the true God, nor that your
 present dispersion is designed to instruct the
 world in that knowledge. Nay, so far was
 the Egyptian bondage from teaching your
 ancestors this important knowledge, that,
 though they were the worshippers of the
 true God when they went into Egypt, they

were idolaters when they came out of it, It was their *deliverance* from the yoke of the Egyptians, not their *subjection* to it, that was the means of instructing them, and other nations too, as Moses abundantly testifies.

In like manner, it will be your *restoration* to your own country, and not your present *banishment* from it, that will be the means of convincing all the world of the truth of your prophecies, and consequently of the truth of your religion, and of confirming them in the faith and pure worship of the God of your fathers to the end of time. The reflexion on the whole of your remarkable history, of your prosperity and adversity, in connexion with your adherence to the worship of the true God, and your obedience to his prophets, or your neglect of it, and your disobedience, when all the prophecies shall have had their completion, cannot fail to strike and convince all. But the long continuance of your sufferings, unconnected with any future consequences, has no tendency to produce that effect. Nay, the longer you continue in your present state, the
more

more is the faith of mankind staggered, and the greater trial it is to your own faith, Many christians, who have the same respect for the books of the Old Testament with yourselves, judging from present appearances, consider you as abandoned of God, and do not believe that you will ever be restored to your country again.

Consider then, I intreat you, your real situation, and how your calamities presently followed the rejection of Christ, and the apostles, by your ancestors (and your nation has persisted in rejecting them to this day) and think whether your receiving them as true prophets of God (who were sent to your nation in the first place) may not be followed by consequences the reverse of those which followed the rejection of them. According to Moses, a restoration to your country will always be the consequence of your repentance of those sins for which you would be expelled from it. Deut. xxx. 1—5. *And it shall come to pass when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them*

them to mind, among all the nations whither the Lord thy God hath driven thee, and shalt return to the Lord thy God, and shalt obey his voice, according to all that I command thee this day, thou and thy children, with all thine heart and with all thy soul; that THEN the Lord thy God will return thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations whither the Lord thy God hath scattered thee. Why is not this glorious prophecy fulfilled? But because you have not yet complied with the conditions of it. According to Moses, your return to your country is always in your own power. Do your part, and your merciful God and father will not delay to do his.

L E T T E R VI.

Of Daniel's Prophecy of Seventy Weeks.

MR. Levi says, p. 91, that “the fairest
 “method to conviction with respect
 “to the messiahship of Jesus, is to take a
 “review of all the prophecies concerning
 “the”

“ the Messiah, from Moses to Malachi, and
“ compare them with the acts of Jesus re-
“ corded in the New Testament, to see
“ whether or no they have been fulfilled in
“ his person.” This, he says, he himself
has done. This I have also done, and you
my see the result of my inquiries in the
Theological Repository, under the signature of
PAMPHILUS. I did not, in my last letters,
trouble you with all the particulars of this
long examination; contenting myself with
mentioning one of those prophecies, but it
is the only one in which the *Messiah* is men-
tioned by that name in your sacred books;
and that which must have led your ances-
tors to distinguish your future deliverer by
that specific appellation. I have shewn
that, according to this celebrated prophecy,
this Messiah must have made his appearance
about the time of Jesus, but certainly long
before the present age.

Mr. Levi gives a very different interpreta-
tion of this prophecy, in reality the same
with that which I quoted from your Rabbi
Isaac, but without answering my objections

to

to it. He will not allow that the Messiah, which is twice mentioned in this prophecy, refers at all to the person whom you *now* distinguish by *that* title; but says that, in the former part of the prophecy, it is to be understood of Cyrus, and in the latter of Agrippa the younger; though, surely, nothing can be more unnatural than to explain it in this manner. Can the same term, in two contiguous sentences of the same prophecy, signify two different persons, one of them a heathen prince, and the other a king of Judea, who lived seven hundred years after him?

Mr. Levi supposes, with R. Isaac and S. Jarchi, though he does not distinctly express it, that the *going forth of the commandment* means the declaration of the divine will to Jeremiah. Ab eo tempore quo Jeremias illam rem proloquutus fuerat, sive a captivitate Zedechiæ usque ad unctum ducem, qui Cyrus est, futuras hebdomadas septem, quæ 49 annos complectuntur. *Munimen Fidei*, p. 338. Tempus dabitur a die devastationis usque dum veniat Cyrus. *Jarchi Comment,*

Comment. Vol ii. p. 779. But nothing is advanced by these writers to make it probable that the *going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem* is coincident with the time of the demolition of it by Nebuchadnezzar. The prophecy of Jeremiah was first delivered in the fourth year of Jehoiakim and the first of Nebuchadnezzar (Jer. xxv. 12.) and repeated, in a letter to the captives, in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah. Ch. xxviii. 1. xxix. 10.

That Agrippa could not be the *latter Messiah* (if there must be two of them in this prophecy) I have shewn, by observing that this prince was not killed at the siege of Jerusalem, but probably ended his days peaceably at Rome, long after. Josephus, in the history of his own life, has given us two letters of this Agrippa, written after he had perused his history, and consequently several years after the destruction of Jerusalem. He is also mentioned by Tacitus, as the ally of the Romans in the Jewish war. And though this writer (Hist. Lib. V.) gives a pretty

pretty circumstantial account of the war, he says nothing of the defection, or death, of that prince in the course of it. By Mr. Levi's own confession, there was a Messiah cut off about that time, and who could this be but Jesus?

Agrippa was too inconsiderable a prince to be the subject of such a prophecy; whereas the figure that Jesus makes in your history is so conspicuous, that it might have been expected that he would have been noticed in your prophecies on some account or other. No Jew, no person of any nation, ever occasioned such a revolution in the religious state of the world (and religion is the great object of your whole constitution) as Jesus Christ has effected. By this single Jew, and his followers, have the idolatrous systems of every nation within the bounds of the whole Roman empire, and far beyond it, been already overturned; and according to present appearances, independent of the prophecies of the New Testament, by Christianity, and not by the institutions of Moses as such, will idolatry (to which those

institutions were particularly opposed) be extirpated out of the world.

But where will you find so distinguished a person in history noticed at all in your prophecies, if he be not the Messiah of Daniel, that Messiah who was to *be cut off, and not for himself*, and the same person who in Daniel, vii. 13. is stiled *the son of man, who will come in the clouds of heaven, and to whom will be given dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, whose dominion will not pass away, and whose kingdom will not be destroyed?*

“The seventy weeks,” Mr. Levi says, p. 41, “are, without doubt, four hundred and ninety years, the time from the destruction of the first temple to the destruction of the second.” But if there be any truth in history, the interval between those two events was about six hundred and fifty years; and it is by history that prophecy must be interpreted.

I observed that it must have been from this prophecy that your ancestors first learned to distinguish your great deliverer by the name of *Messiah*. But Mr. Levi says, p.

49, “It

94, " It is not the *name* of the Messiah, " but the *character* of the person foretold " by the prophets that is to be regarded;" and he observes that the Chaldee Paraphrasts have used that term, in their interpretation of other prophecies which they apply to your future deliverer. But what could have led *them* to apply this term to your great deliverer, but their supposing that he was the same person who had been so denominated in this prophecy of Daniel? The term never occurs in any preceding prophecy, except in Isaiah, in which it is applied to Cyrus. And this heathen prince could never have been supposed to be the person whom you now call *the Messiah*. Undoubtedly, therefore, they who first used this term, as denoting your *future deliverer*, must have thought that he was the same person who was intended in the prophecy of Daniel; and it cannot have been any thing but your disappointment, in his not coming about the time signified by Daniel, that has led your writers to seek out some other interpretation.

It is manifest that your ancestors in general *did* expect the appearance of the Messiah about the time of Jesus Christ; and what could have occasioned their expectation of him so much, *at that particular time*, but a supposition that he was the person intended by Daniel in this prophecy, the accomplishment of which you even now acknowledge falls about that time?

L E T T E R VII.

THE CONCLUSION.

I CANNOT conclude this second set of letters to you, without once more entreating you to give due attention to the proper, that is the historical, evidence of Christianity. For it is on this, which Mr. Levi has not so much as touched upon, that the controversy between us must hinge. Examine the credibility of the gospel history, as you would that of any other history that

PART II. E should

should fall into your hands. Consider at what time the books which contain it were published, and how they were received. If their authenticity be equal to that of other credible histories, so that you can depend upon the truth of the *leading facts* (which is all that we can say of any history) consider what those leading facts are, who appear to have been the witnesses of them, whether they were persons likely to be deceived themselves, or to attempt to deceive others; and whether, if that might have been their intention, it was in their power to do it.

Let me particularly recommend to your careful perusal the *Letters* I lately addressed to *philosophical unbelievers* in general, and which I requested that you would consider as addressed to yourselves in particular. If from them it should appear that Jesus wrought real miracles, or did such things as a man could not have done if God had not been with him, you can no more disregard his authority than that of Moses. If, after proving his divine mission by a series of unquestionable miracles, Jesus persisted in declaring himself

to

to be *the Messiah* of your scriptures, it will be impossible not to allow his claim. And the difficulty, which, from a long confirmed habit of thinking otherwise, you will feel in reconciling to his character and conduct the descriptions of the Messiah in the prophecies, will at length be overcome by more attentive consideration.

Do not reject without examination the hypothesis I mentioned in my former Letters, and which I have maintained at large in the *Theological Repository*, of the distinction between the *Messiah* who was to suffer, and who alone bears that name, and the *prince of the house of David*, under whom you are to enjoy your future glory.

However, if this supposition should not appear to be well founded, it will not follow that Jesus is not the Messiah, the Messiah whom you expect; as it may be even *under him*, in some sense or other, that you shall enjoy your future happiness. But with respect to all these things, you should, with diligence, and without prejudice, study the scriptures, and judge for yourselves; bal-

ancing one difficulty with another, and adopting that scheme which, *on the whole*, shall appear to be attended with the *fewest* difficulties. In the interpretation of prophecies we cannot expect to meet with none.

If after this you be convinced (as I am confident that, if you examine without prejudice, you will be) that Jesus wrought real miracles, and that, after dying he rose from the dead, whatever else he be, he cannot be a person who is not intitled to your regard; and your conduct with respect to him cannot be a matter of indifference in the sight of God. If God, the God of your fathers, really sent him, he will expect that, as his messenger, you pay due attention to him. To reject *him*, will be to reject *him that sent him*. And if this be the case, can you wonder that he has rejected you? But *return unto him, and he will return unto you*, Mal, iii, 7.

I have made this second address to you, not because I thought Mr. Levi's arguments formidable. Of this I think you must now

be sensible yourselves; but rather to show the importance of a defence of your principles, better considered, and better conducted, than his has been; and it is my earnest wish that the ablest men you have may give their most serious attention to it. To *you* no subject whatever can be half so interesting; and, be assured, I do not address you as a *disputant*, desirous of triumphing in any advantage I may have in the argument, but from the truest respect to your nation, as most highly distinguished by the great *father of all the families of the earth* (to which, as a Christian, I think myself, and all mankind, under infinite obligations) and from the most earnest wish to promote your welfare, here and hereafter.

I have given much attention to your history, and especially your controversies with Christians in all ages, and I do not wonder that they have issued in confirming your prejudices against Christianity. In all of them the Christians have insisted upon topics with respect to which it was impossible that you should come to an agreement,

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especially

especially the divinity of Christ, and the doctrine of the trinity, that "absurd and corrupt tenet," as Mr. Levi properly calls it. You justly think yourselves excused from giving the least attention to any arguments that may be alleged in support of it; since it is an attempt to draw you to the worship of *another God* besides that of your fathers.

It must more particularly excite your indignation, to be told that your ancestors themselves held the doctrine of the trinity, and that they expected the second person of it in your Messiah, than which you know that nothing can be more contrary to truth, or probability.

But as your own writers have never failed to reproach Christians with this doctrine, as not taught even in the New Testament, and you find that many Christians reject it with as much indignation as yourselves, you ought to consider this great stumbling block as removed, and therefore that the religion of Christ *may* come from God. Examine then, with impartiality, the evidences of his
divine

divine mission, and compare them with those of Moses and your other prophets.

And here the question is not which miracles were the more *splendid*, or which we may imagine to have been more *proper*, and, as Mr. Levi says, more *rational*, but only which are the *best attested*. Of the other we cannot pretend to be competent judges. Every miracle, or real change in the established course of nature, is equally a proof of the interposition of the author of nature, and may serve as an evidence of a divine mission; the changing of a rod into a serpent, as much as the passage of your fathers through the Red Sea, or the wonderful appearances at Mount Sinai. I, therefore, earnestly intreat, that this, and this only (or at least chiefly) may be the subject of our discussion.

To my endeavours by writing, I shall not fail to add my most earnest prayers to your God and my God, that great Being *in whose hands are the hearts of all men*, and who, by means ordinary or extraordinary, as seems
best

best to his infinite wisdom, *turns them* (Prov. xxi. 1.) *as the rivers of water which way so-ever he pleases*, to remove your prejudices, and every obstacle that for the present prevents your reception of a truth in which you are most nearly interested, and according to his faithful promises, restore you to his favour, never to lose it any more.

I once more subscribe myself, with the greatest respect and affection,

Your brother in the sole worship

Of the one only true God,

JOSEPH PRIESTLEY.

BIRMINGHAM,

July 1, 1787.

THE
R E P L Y
O F
T H E J E W S

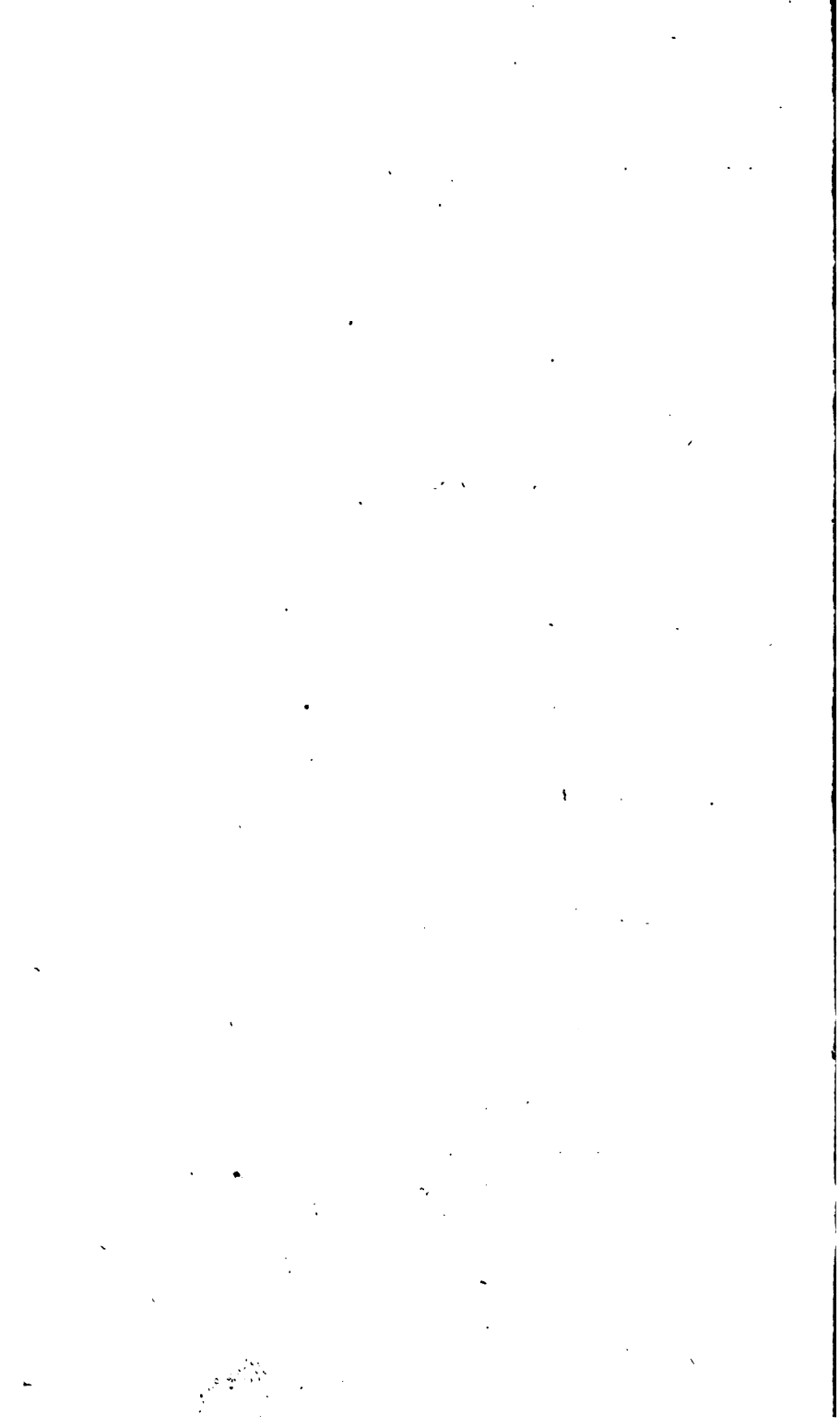
T O T H E
L E T T E R S

ADDRESSED TO THEM BY
DOCTOR JOSEPH PRIESTLEY.

BY SOLOMON DE A. R.,

ענה כסיל כאולתו PROV. XXVI. 6.

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A

LETTER, &c.

SIR,

YOUR Letters have been read by those to whom they are addressed, and I am desired to communicate to you their reply, which is in the following terms. We hope it will not offend you if we say, the requisition contained in your Letters to us, cannot be complied with, for the reasons which shall be subjoined. The requisition is, that we acknowledge your Jesus to be our Messiah, and that we become Christians, and adopt the Christian Faith according to your mode.

A

The

The Jesus, whom you hold up to us as our Messiah, you say, was a very good man, and a true worshipper of God; you tell us he was a Jew, and the son of the carpenter Joseph and his wife Mary, and nothing more. That he had a divine mission, and performed many miracles in confirmation of it—That those miracles, although not so splendid, were nevertheless as credible and certain as those of Moses, and that we therefore ought to receive him as our Messiah—And moreover, that all the sufferings of our nation, for more than 1700 years, are to be ascribed to our having crucified and rejected him.

We are free to own to you, Sir, we see no reason at all in any of this.

Seventeen hundred years of almost extermination, seems to be a punishment greater than the offence required. For the whole offence chargeable upon our fathers, according to your own account, was, that they put
to

to death the son of a poor mechanic, who you say was a good man, and had a divine mission. Were not our prophets good men, Sir? Had not they likewise a divine mission? Did not they perform miracles? Did not our fathers evil entreat them? Why therefore should the punishment inflicted on us (if it be inflicted on that account) for putting Jesus to death so much exceed any punishment inflicted on our fathers for putting any of the former prophets to death? The crime was the same in both instances, but the punishment bears no manner of proportion.

You require us to acknowledge your Jesus for our Messiah. We cannot do it, Sir; and, were we to acknowledge such an one for our Messiah, we should think we deserved to be the accursed outcasts from God, not only in this world, but the next; and therefore never will we acknowledge your Jesus, Sir, for our Messiah. A Messiah, we own, we have been all along taught to expect, by the wri-

tings of Moses and the Prophets; a Messiah, Sir, of whom great things are said, and who, as we conceive, should bring us with triumph into our own land, and establish us by his great power over all the kingdoms of the earth. Hath your Jesus done any thing of this kind for us? Or do you pretend that he is to do any thing of the kind for us? You totally deny it; and our future establishment and reduction into our own land, you in express terms tell us, is to be effected under a Prince of the house of David, which you do not pretend to be the character of your Jesus; for you tell us a very different story of him, which if you credit we assure you we do not.

But, Sir, you say he had a divine mission: To do what? What was the particular errand and design of his mission? Was it to reclaim us from idolatry? You yourself acknowledge that idolatry was a crime against which we had scrupulously guarded for a
long

long series of years, and that we neither had nor have any the least propensity towards it. Was it to reclaim us from our neglect of the precepts of the law? These it is notorious our fathers did not neglect ; on the contrary, they were more rigidly more minutely attached to the observance of them than at any preceding time. Did he come to abrogate the law given to us by Moses? No ; you say the law of Moses is of perpetual obligation, and that if we become Christians we are still to continue Jews, and observers of the law of Moses. What then could have been the end and design of the mission of your Jesus, we profess we are unable to discover? Neither do we see how our fathers, by putting such an one to death as you describe him to have been, could have incurred so severe a penalty : for, according to your representation of him, he had a divine mission to perform nothing, and had a power of working miracles conferred upon him in order

der to confirm a mission which had nothing for its object.

You are infatuated, Sir, if you think any thing you have said in your Letters can make converts of any of us to your religion. We shall acknowledge no Messiah that hath not power of some sort. It doth not appear that yours, whom you call upon us to acknowledge, hath any power at all. He came for no end, to effect nothing; having a mission, as you say, but without any object of it; and working miracles in order to confirm the truth of a mission, which, at the same time, you are unable to ascertain. Be not offended at us, Sir, if we say it is a jest, a banter upon our whole nation, to expect that we should become converts to your persuasion, and that we should adopt him for our Messiah, who, by your own confession, hath power neither in heaven nor in earth. We are not yet sunk so much beneath the common standard of idiots.

You

You call upon us to read and consider the Gospel. To the Gospel and to the histories therein contained, we are no strangers ; and concerning this Gospel we desire to offer you these following observations. The first is, that the Jesus there spoken of is a very different character from him whom you hold up to us as our Messiah. That Jesus not only is said to have wrought miracles in confirmation of his mission, but is said likewise to have displayed a power greater than even that of Moses. He is not only represented to have been a prophet, like unto our great prophet Moses, but to have been more than a prophet. He required it of his followers, that they should testify to and receive him under this character. He professed himself to be the Son of God, speaking blasphemy therein, in the opinion of our fathers. He plainly declared, and unequivocally, his own pre-existence. Whether he spoke truth in so declaring is not now before us ; such an account the Gospel, to which you refer us, undoubtedly

doubtedly contains. If therefore we attend to this Gospel, how can we attend to you ? Your Jesus, you say, never had any pre-existence, was simply the son of two human persons, and that he himself never pretended to have had a pre-existence, nor ever laid claim to divinity. But surely, Sir, in this, either you or the Gospel of the Christians must speak false. The Gospel of the Christians, if the historical part of it can be relied on, assures us, in the plainest terms, that he did arrogate divinity to himself, and that our fathers crucified him on that account ; and, in derision of him, when he hung upon the cross, they called out to him, and bade him come down from the cross, by the divine power which he pretended to, and convince them that he was their God and King. Strenuous assertors as they were of the divine unity, they could not endure the blasphemy wherewith they say he blasphemed, when he called himself the Son of God, and said he was one with the Father. It was
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on this account they proceeded with so much rigour and severity : neither are we able, after a very strict attention to the Gospel, to which you refer us, to assign any other probable cause of their conduct towards him.

Suffer us, Sir, to speak with freedom to you. In the Gospel received by Christians we see plainly taught the doctrines of the Trinity, the divinity and pre-existence of him you call Christ, and the miraculous conception ; and for these reasons, if there were no other, we have rejected and still continue to reject, the Gospel, and cannot become converts to the Christian religion. In your Letters to us you have affected to remove these stumbling blocks : but it is impossible : nothing you can say or offer will be able to remove them. In the Gospel they certainly are ; and, except you could prove to us, to our full conviction, that the offensive doctrines are not there, and moreover that they never had been there, you say nothing.

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What

What is it to us, Sir, whether you believe them or not? Do they cease to be doctrines of the Christian Gospel because you do not believe them? And, if they are the doctrines of the Gospel, how can we embrace Christianity without embracing them? If we forsake the religion of our fathers, and do not embrace them, whatever else we may become, we certainly do not become Christians. It was the grand stumbling block, the original cause of our fathers' rejecting Jesus, that he asserted his own pre-existence and divinity. You say, on the other hand, that you do not believe these doctrines; very likely you do not, as neither do we. Yet, what then? Because neither you nor we believe them? Are they not doctrines of the Gospel? And, if they are doctrines of the Gospel, can we become Christians without assenting to them? It is strange that you should attempt to persuade us to forsake the religion of our fathers, having only such unsubstantial reasons to offer for our conversion. Prove to us, that Jesus, when he was alive, assumed and
required

required only those honours from his followers which were due to a mere human creature. Prove that he disclaimed all pretensions to divinity, or pre-existence. Prove that our fathers always understood him as disclaiming any such pretentions; and point out to us the time, and prove it, when such doctrines were first introduced into the world, after his decease.—None of these things, Sir, you can prove; because Jesus always did, in his life time, claim to be considered as a divine pre-existent person, and our fathers crucified him for it; and the Christians' Gospel witnesses the same; and the testimony of all antiquity is to the same effect. Contemptible and illiterate as you esteem us to be, and as your Letters represent us, we know enough of antiquity, and its opinions, to repel your very injurious and fallacious attacks upon us and our forefathers. did our fathers cause Jesus to be put to death without any, at least specious, allegation of criminality? Did they proceed against him under all the forms

of public judicature, and lay nothing to his charge which by our law would subject him to the penalty of death? Would the judge have attended to them if they had? What a slander has this cast upon the whole nation of our ancestors! As if they caused Jesus to be crucified merely out of wantonness; and as if the judge condemned him to death without any charge being brought against him. Let us call upon you, Sir, in our turn, to read the Gospel; and, if you yourself give any credit to it, you will there find that when the Governor was willing to have released Jesus, our fathers were urgent that he should not release him. We have a law, they said, and by that law he ought to die; because he made himself the Son of God. It was not that he had reproved them, or censured them with so much asperity, that was the crime laid to his charge. The crime was, that he had violated the law of God; that he had set himself up to be a divine person, and thereby infringed on that most fundamental
 article

article of our religion, the Unity of God. This was the crime with which our rulers charged him ; and this was the crime for which they caused him to be put to death. And this likewise is the reason why we have and still continue in our opposition to the Gospel.

Thus, Sir, you see it is impossible any thing you have said in your Letters to us should be of any weight with us. But you will say you do not call upon us to quit our religion, and embrace the offensive doctrines of the Trinity, the Divinity of Jesus, and his miraculous conception ; all that you desire is, that we should receive and believe the Gospel, and acknowledge Jesus to have been the person announced by the Prophets under the character of our Messiah—that he had a divine mission, evidenced by his miracles and resurrection—that he is ascended into heaven, and will come again to raise the dead and judge the world. Admit, you say, the truth

truth of these articles only, and we shall readily acknowledge you to be Christians. We are a little surpris'd at all this, for we always understood that something more was necessary to be done in order to our being denominated the disciples of Christ, *i. e.* Christians. Jesus himself, if the first of your Gospels is true, ordered all his disciples to be baptized, and by a very peculiar form; nay, he ordered them to be made his disciples by baptism. But how can we submit to be baptized by that form which he has prescribed, wherein he attests that the same name is common to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost? And if we are baptized into that name, will it not be to acknowledge that the name of the Great God and Father of All is the name of the Son, *i. e.* of Jesus, who said he was the Son of God and of the Holy Ghost. Whatever you may do, we cannot be guilty of such great prevarication as to be baptized into a name which we do not acknowledge; and baptized into it we cannot
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be without the greatest prevarication and hypocrisy, unless we do acknowledge that God, the name of the Father, is the name likewise of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. This indeed you do not desire us to acknowledge. Why then are you so urgent with us to become Christians, when Christians we cannot be without acknowledging it, if the Gospel is true? All this, Sir, puzzles and perplexes us much : we know not what it is you would have us be : you say you would have us be Christians : but Christians are such as conform to and hold the faith of Christians ; and the faith of Christians you seem to justify us in abhorring ; nay, you even join with us yourself in the abhorrence of it.

You tell us, Sir, of a great body of Jewish Christians, generally called Ebionites, and produce them (if we understand you) as evidences of the truth of Christianity, which they would not have embraced, if they had
not

not had the fullest and most satisfactory assurance that Jesus was undoubtedly the Messiah. But if these Ebionites were Christians, how came they to be called Ebionites? In the treatise which you call the Acts of the Apostles, and to which you so particularly direct our attention, we there find that the distinguishing name of the disciples of Jesus, was Christians; which name, the Writer says, was first given them at Antioch. But we nowhere find that any of them were called Ebionites; so that, if these men were Christians, there must have been some very singular reason for their having a name given them to distinguish them from their fellow Christians. Sir, you should have told us the truth upon this subject: these Ebionites, in religion, were neither Jews nor Christians; they were the followers of one Ebion, from whom they derived their name, and who adopting and propagating opinions, partly derived from our religion, and partly from the Christian, became the abhorrence of all parties. Must we

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we desert the religion of our fathers to become Ebionites? No, Sir; when we are at all inclined to become Christians, we will become Christians indeed, and embrace Christianity as it really is. At present we do not find ourselves in the least disposed to renounce the privileges we now enjoy, in being the disciples of Moses, in order to become the disciples of Ebion. A word or two more and we have done.

In your fifth Letter, you thus address us —“ Some of you may perhaps say, that you cannot enter into any discussion concerning the evidence of Christianity, till the different professors of it shall agree among themselves, and tell you what it really is.” If, perhaps, some of us should so say, it would only be in answer to you, personally: in conformity with the directions of our wise King, who hath advised us in what manner to give an answer to persons of a certain description. We do not want the different pro-

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feffors to tell us what Christianity really is; nor need we any union of sentiment among them, to enable us to understand what it is. Your Book, which you call the New Testament, is plain and explicit enough, without the aid of any of the different professors of Christianity: whatever their opinions may be, Christianity will still be the same. Christianity, if we understand any thing, is the religion of your New Testament; just as our religion is the religion inculcated by our great Lawgiver Moses. Do the different opinions among us at all affect the Law of our great Legislator? Do our opinions make it to be a different thing from what it is? No more do your differing opinions make the religion of Jesus a different thing from what it is. You say the Gospels of Matthew and Luke contain things that are not true; and that the whole of the New Testament has some things borrowed from the Heathens. We do not pretend to dispute this with you; but only one thing we desire
 you

you to observe, that we think we have as good authority to reject the whole, as you have to reject any part, of the New Testament. If you have any authority to chuse for yourself what part of it you will receive and believe, we certainly have as good authority to chuse for ourselves, and whether we will receive and believe any of it. Assuredly you have acted a very unwise part in inviting us to be of a religion which it does not appear you have adopted yourself; and in recommending us to be governed by a book, to which, in the most material articles of it, you professedly give no kind of credit.

If you were in want of employment of something to do when you wrote your Letters to us, or if you were asleep, and knew not what you wrote, we might contrive to invent some apology for you; but, as we suppose you will not allow of our apologizing thus for you, we must leave you to the censure of your own judgement, when you are

awake. In the mean time, we hope, Sir, you will not be offended with our censure, when we declare your Letters to be the idlest and most incoherent jargon we ever read; a flimsy spider's web, which, whatever it may do with flies, will never catch men.

Having thus given you the reply of those to whom you have addressed your Letters, and for whose emolument you intend to have them translated, as you inform us, into Hebrew, give me leave, Sir, now to address you for myself.

There is a degree of candor and benevolence (real or affected you best know) running through your Letters, which could not avoid being extremely pleasing, were it not for that air of superciliousness and superiority, with which the whole is contaminated. The persons to whom you address yourself, appear in your Letters to be little better than contemptible children, or idiots, incapable of attending

attending to solid manly arguments, and therefore to be amused with gewgaws and trifles; why you should treat them thus, perhaps yourself can best explain; but assuredly you very ill consulted the credit of your own intention, if your design was to recommend yourself by its benevolence. The spirit of benevolence is at a prodigious distance from such kind of treatment. Indeed, as far as I am concerned, I can freely acquit you of any designed disrespect in the manufacture of your Letters; and I am firmly persuaded, the reason why you offered no manly solid arguments was, because you had none to offer; whether from the barrenness of your subject, or of your own invention, I shall not determine. Could you not, out of all your publications, which, as you advertise us at the end of your Letters, may be had complete for fifteen pounds ten shillings, borrow one solid argument to have offered to the consideration of the Jews? Then assuredly all your publications are not worth fifteen pence. However, I will not put you out of humour.

Sir,

Sir, you have expressed yourself in the warmest terms of approbation of the law of Moses, and of the religion of the Jews. Addressing yourself to them, you thus speak: "We owe infinite obligation to your nation for upbraiding us, as you have never ceased to do, with paying divine honours to Jesus Christ, and making a Trinity in the divine Nature, and consequently with being idolaters;" and again, "Your nation is the great object to which our eyes are directed;" again, your country is "sufficiently and properly situated to be the head of all countries; and where your nation will reign as kings and priests unto God, receiving the homage of all other nations, and presenting offerings unto God in their behalf." Impressed as you appear to be with these and other similar sentiments in favour of the Jewish nation, suffer me most earnestly to request and to prevail with you to relinquish your own religion, whatever that may be, and to be engrafted among the Jews a disciple

disciple of the great Legislator Moses. To this, I imagine, you can have no solid objection, since your principles are so very nearly allied to theirs. Are they worshippers of the Unity? So you say, are you. Have they the faith of Christians in abhorrence? So it seems have you. Do they reject the New Testament? In a great measure you do the same. Are they attached to the observations of the sabbath? You, likewise, are an advocate for it. And, do they believe in the perpetual obligation of all the laws of Moses, prescribed to the nation of the Jews, in the obligation of circumcision and other customs derived from their ancestors? You yourself, *totidem verbis*, profess to believe in the same. Jew, then, as you are in principle, what hinders but that you should profess yourself one openly? What hinders but that you should hasten to be circumcised, and to be engrafted among the children of the stock of Abraham? Difficulty you can have none in renouncing the faith of Christians; and,

as for your own mungrel religion, you do not seem to know how to make either head or tail of it. Away with it, therefore, and without shame or fear acknowledge yourself to be, what it is almost impossible not to think you really are: I say without shame or fear, for shame and fear are the two powerful motives by which men are induced often to neglect what is their undeniable duty, and to persevere in fooleries which even they themselves do not approve of, as in the present instance.

Shame, I can easily conceive, will keep you back from professing yourself to be a Jew. For, after having addressed Letters to the Jews with a view of drawing them over to your religion, with what face, you say, can you profess yourself a convert to theirs? It would be such a reproach, such a slur upon your character, as even all your philosophy would not be able to support you under. But, besides this, if you become a Jew, and publicly profess the Jewish religion, you will subject yourself to all that ridicule and very particular

particular contempt with which persons of that persuasion are usually treated. You shall not be able to stir, but somebody or other will be at hand, fully prepared *oppedere* you, than which nothing upon earth can be more completely disgraceful.

Pardon me, Sir, in interrupting you ; but you totally misinterpret this matter. The phrase *curtis Judais oppedere*, to which you allude, (it was the odd phrase of a very pleasant fellow) is not to be interpreted literally, but metaphorically. You cannot conceive that the Romans when they met a Jew, used to assault him in this manner ; or that they accustomed themselves, on the *tricesima sab-bata*, to untruss and bombard the synagogues. But if they did, how will that affect you ? No such practice prevails here in England ; so that you need be apprehensive of no shame or disgrace on any such account as this. And besides, All Philosopher as you are, so intimately acquainted with all the different vari-

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ety of airs, fixed and unfixed, phlogistic, mephitic, &c. should any mad-brained fellow unpeg the cave of Æolus against you, what need you care? Instead of disgracing you, it would serve rather to assist you in your philosophical lucubrations, and enable you to furnish the world with a complete and satisfactory analysis of the subject; which, to the best of my knowledge, never yet has been done.

Lay aside therefore all false shame, or apprehensions of disgrace, from an event which most probably never will happen. Be bold, and openly profess the religion of which you think such great things, and no longer let your name be numbered among the uncircumcised. What I have already said I again repeat; hasten to be circumcised, and to be engrafted among the children of the stock of Abraham; and let not fear in this instance, as shame in the former, operate with you against a compliance.

Circumcision

Circumcision you know to be an indispensable rite of the religion of the Hebrews, and that no one can be incorporated into their society till he hath undergone the operation. I need not mention for your encouragement, the ancient Fathers from the days of Abraham, who were all of them circumcised; I will refer you to more recent instances, namely, that great body of Jewish Christians, the Ebionites, whom you speak of with so much approbation. Their principles, Sir, you have adopted, adopt their practice likewise, and become an Ebionite indeed. By your own acknowledgement, the being circumcised cannot prejudice you at all in your religious profession; for, if the Jews were to embrace Christianity, you say they must still persevere in the practice of circumcision; so that you cannot plead against it, that by being circumcised you virtually would renounce such faith as you have. In your opinion, the Jews might practice circumcision consistently

with Christianity, if they should embrace it, and therefore so may you.

Here then, doubtless you will reply to me, that it is not for any such reason as the above, that you have hitherto declined circumcision. Any prejudice that may arise to your religious profession is totally out of the question. Your reason is of a very different nature. Circumcision is at all times a severe operation ; and, at your time of life, could not be submitted to without great difficulty and distress, and even danger.

All this, Sir, is nothing but common cant, suggested by those two unworthy motives which I have endeavoured to guard you against. What is your time of life to the purpose ? How does that make it more difficult to circumcise you now than if you was ten or twenty years younger ? The operation will be the same now as it would have been then, and performed just in the same manner, without

without the minutest difference ; and therefore it is idle to the last degree to urge your time of life as an objection to the performance of the operation. Have done, I beseech you, with such poor subterfuges, and come with the boldness and confidence of a man, and submit to the operation, without urging any more these imaginary difficulties and distress, which, in reality, subsist no where but in your own imagination.

But you say there is danger in the operation. In what respect ? Are not you as other men are ? How then can there be any danger in it ? You fancy the operator's hand may slip, and so you might receive irreparable damage. What damage you might receive in case his hand was to slip, I will not pretend to say, for I do not know. But with the greatest confidence I can assure you that you run no risk of any such thing ; for the operators are always persons of the greatest experience in their profession ; their instruments are in every respect

respect perfectly adapted to their business, which they perform always with the greatest address and expedition. It is true, if you were to jerk and wriggle about, while you were under the hands of the operator, I cannot answer for the consequences ; something might happen which neither you nor I can foresee ; but if you preserve yourself calm, without turbulence or refractoriness, I do not see how any possible evil can happen from your being circumcised, let your age be what it will. However, to make you perfectly easy on this head, I am to inform you that, for the accommodation of persons who apply for circumcision at your time of life, ample provision is made that no evil shall ensue. For such—A table is prepared, something in the form of a hog's back, six feet in length, *i. e.* in the chord. Upon this the subject is laid, and incurvated to the utmost of his bent ; and in this position he hath in some measure the appearance of a piece of wood that is incurvated for the purpose of becoming the
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felly of a cart wheel. Across his neck, his hands and arms, and legs and thighs, are thrown proper ligatures, which fasten him so completely to the table, that he can neither shrink downwards nor jerk upwards. But this is not all. After he is thus fastened to the table, side boards are applied close to his body, and screwed up as tight as possible, which take from him entirely all power of wriggling or motion of any kind, except in thought; and in this posture, the operator being secured against all hazard of interruption in his operation, it is performed with the utmost safety and expedition.

Having thus, Sir, most plainly evidenced that you will run no manner of risk in submitting to the operation, (your roaring, though it were to be as loud as of a bull of Basan, the operator will not regard) let me now most earnestly entreat you to lose no time, but hasten to the synagogue, that the rite may be accomplished. And when it is, and you shall
publish

publish your complete and satisfactory Analysis, which the world will then expect from you, you will be enabled to add to the number of your titles *Nunc demum curtus inter Judæos*, and your title-page will announce that it is written by JOSEPH PRIESTLEY, LL. D. F. R. S. AC. IMP. PETROP. R. PARIS. HOLM. TAURIN. AUREL. MED. PARIS. HARLEM. CANTAB. AMERIC. ET PHILAD. SOCIUS; ET DEM. CURT. INT. JUD.

Here, Sir, it was my intention to have concluded my letter to you. But upon presenting it for the inspection and approbation of those whom I dare not disobey, unfortunately for us both, I find I am altogether wrong in my application to you. Should you present yourself to the Jews for circumcision they will not receive you. It is a maxim among the Turks that a bad Christian will never make a good Mussulman. And the Jews think, that, if they were to admit into their society such a Christian as you profess
yourself

yourself to be, it would be impossible that you should ever prove faithful to the Law of Moses. You would be trimming and new modelling the Pentateuch, just as you have served the Gospel of the Christians. Therefore they will have nothing to say to you. It is a sad affair, Sir, but there is no remedy. However, if I might advise you, go and offer yourself to the Turks. Notwithstanding their maxim, it is possible they might admit you among them, and, if they should, all would be well. If however, they likewise should reject you, then, as desperate cases must have desperate remedies, all I can advise you is, to circumcise yourself.

In the mean time, Sir, though not of your religion, I am

Your humble servant,

APR 15 1915

SOLOMON DE A. R.

